First Call for Children

The essential needs of children should be given priority in bad times as well as good' — *Plan of Action, World Summit for Children*

The shape of things to come

UNICEF/Marita Lee

This child's enlarged thyroid gland signals iodine deficiency, a problem countries are determined to eliminate. Five cents' worth of iodized salt per person per year can do it.

The world has its work set out for it over the next few years. It can eliminate iodine deficiency by ensuring that all salt consumed is iodized, thus improving the lives of millions, as David Haxton writes in this issue. It can also make the earth polio-free, sparing approximately 120,000 children every year from disability or death, through a combination of political commitment, effective vaccine delivery, scrupulous disease surveillance and careful geographical targeting, as Dr. Nick Ward of the World Health Organization explains.

And those are just two of the 27 goals, endorsed by leaders at the World Summit for Children, that stand as beacons along the road to the year 2000. By their light, we see our progress and are reminded, again and again, that the world has found the needless suffering and death of children unacceptable.

The human, political and financial resources needed to meet these goals must be mustered, in the largest sense, by developing nations. But at this time of unprecedented opportunity it is important to remember that currently only four countries give official development assistance at or above the UN target of 0.7 per cent of their gross national products. And that less than 10 per cent of the assistance the industrialized world gives goes towards human needs such as primary health care, education and water and sanitation. Finally, as *The State of the World's Children 1993* report points out, debt repayments by the developing world to its creditors are three times more than all the aid they receive.

The goals for children deserve the world's sincerest support. Their cost as well as their benefits must be shared collectively by us all.

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First Call for Children

'The essential needs of children should be given priority in bad times as well as good' — *Plan of Action, World Summit for Children*

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Government sued for withholding child-survival facts

Indian solicitor Biswapriya Kanungo, disturbed by high infant mortality in the state of Orissa in India and what he sees as the Government's failure to empower people with available knowledge, recently took the authorities to court over the matter. It is the first public interest case in the state — and perhaps in the country — ever filed by a member of the community on child survival.

A newspaper report, which appeared in October 1992, on the high death rate due to diarrhoeal dehydration in children, sparked the case. The report quoted from the 'Situation Analysis of Women and Children' in Orissa, prepared by a leading research agency on behalf of UNICEF.

Kanungo's suit contends that every week a catastrophe of the magnitude of the Bhopal toxic gas disaster occurs in the state in terms of child deaths and argues that both the state of Orissa, and the Government of India have failed to protect children.

The petition notes that a solution of water, salt and sugar can prevent 55 per cent of deaths due to diarrhoeal dehydration. The failure of authorities to make the public aware of such measures and to provide pure drinking water has thus contributed to the deaths of 100,000 children from diarrhoea every year in the state.

The UNICEF situation analysis is quoted, as are prior court rulings and case laws, such as M.O. Mehta vs. Union on India, in which the Supreme Court observed that keeping citizens informed was an obligation of the Government.

The petition urges the High Court to study the conditions of infants in the state and to recommend time-bound measures to curb child deaths. It also urges that the Government be directed to initiate schemes to make people aware of child survival issues through the media, pamphlets, leaflets and government functionaries, and that a budget be provided for these activities.

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World gears up to eradicate polio

Polio vaccine is easy to administer — just a drop in the mouth — but can polio be eradicated by the year 2000? A third of the time allotted has already elapsed.

Susan Guthridge interviews Dr. Nick Ward of the World Health Organization on the strategies.

UNICEF/Matsas

Over 2 billion doses a year of polio vaccine will be needed to eradicate the disease.

A race against time is pressing the polio initiative to put in place faster and more accurate systems for reporting cases, for identifying polio outbreaks and for testing the wily virus in laboratories.

Researchers are rushing to produce a thermostable vaccine which would be able to withstand a week in a health worker's pocket. And fund-raisers are finding ways to purchase the vast amounts of vaccine needed for an accelerated attack. Although a dose of oral polio vaccine (OPV) costs only 7 US cents, over 2 billion doses a year will be needed for the routine and mass immunizations required to eradicate polio.

Dr. Nick Ward of the World Health Organization (WHO) says he is optimistic. "With strong political commitment, sound management strategies and enough vaccine to hit the virus a few times with mass campaigns, polio will quickly disappear."

Visible difference

The inspiration for the polio initiative was the eradication of smallpox in the late 1970s. The goal, as with smallpox, is to eliminate the disease and wipe out the virus that causes it. Polio, however, poses some bigger problems than smallpox.

Smallpox, for instance, declared itself with easily visible rashes. "We could readily tell if a rash was caused by typhus, measles or something else. But only one in 100 cases of polio actually shows paralysis. The other cases seem to have nothing wrong with them, but they are infectious," Ward says.

Differences exist in vaccination responses also. "With smallpox we could find the cases and then vaccinate everyone in a circle. For a smallpox outbreak in Bangladesh, we vaccinated everyone within a five kilometre circle. Last time for polio in Brazil, we delivered 2 million doses of vaccines," Ward recalls.

To overcome these and other complex challenges, the polio initiative is focusing on four primary issues.

Political and financial priority

Egypt's President and First Lady, Hosni and Suzanne Mubarak, have declared their determination to eliminate polio in their country by 1994. The country has set up a control centre, trained health workers and instituted mass immunization campaigns.

"They are doing all the right things. There is every indication that they will meet their goal," says Ward.

A crucial step is for polio elimination to become a top political priority. The resulting mobilization and support for the initiative is important, in particular because countries must bear the major costs of the undertaking, among which the purchase of vaccines is the greatest. Rotary International *(please see story at left)* has given significant support over the years, but the demands of eradication will require additional resources. Funds are also needed for professional epidemiologists and paediatricians, for management training and for

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Rotary readies strategy

Rotary International has given the words 'service organization' new meaning.

Its PolioPlus campaign, launched in 1985, helped make history, contributing to the dramatic achievement of universal child immunization (UCI) in 1990. Grass-roots mobilization and advocacy were crucial, with Rotary volunteers participating in immunization drives around the world. Generosity has been another deciding factor: Rotary has raised over US$240 million for vaccine grants to 97 governments thus far.

Now Rotary is eyeing the next landmark goal — the eradication of polio by the year 2000 — with the same sense of pragmatism that has made it such a valuable partner. Among the factors prompting tactical adjustments are the rising cost of vaccines and the sheer amounts needed to eradicate polio.

Advocacy and mobilization, always strong parts of the organization's capacity, are thus assuming even greater importance. "Our primary focus now is on advocacy," said Michael Diamond, Manager of Humanitarian Programmes of the Rotary Foundation of Rotary International Encouraging governments to maintain routine immunization efforts is one crucial aspect.

With the resources it has, Rotary is determined to do more, more effectively. The organization will fund social mobilization and surveillance activities, and help meet contingencies.

"We can use our funds for mopping up, or to fill a shortfall somewhere. China had a shortfall recently and we contributed $1 million," Diamond said.

Rotary's organizational strengths will continue to be tapped, said Diamond, pointing to the community service subcommittees in each club as sources of support. He noted that PolioPlus committees were formed in India and Nigeria recently.

In Bombay (India), Rotary's Village Youth Corps scored an important immunization success. The Corps — composed of motivated rural youths recruited and trained by Rotarian business leaders — helped in an intensive two-week campaign to immunize tens of thousands of poor children missed in normal immunization efforts.

Keeping the pressure on governments and collaborating with partners are priorities for Rotary, now that another historic goal is almost within reach. "Rotary, UNICEF, the Pan American Health Organization, the World Health Organization, each of us brings different tools to the task and we work cooperatively," Diamond says.

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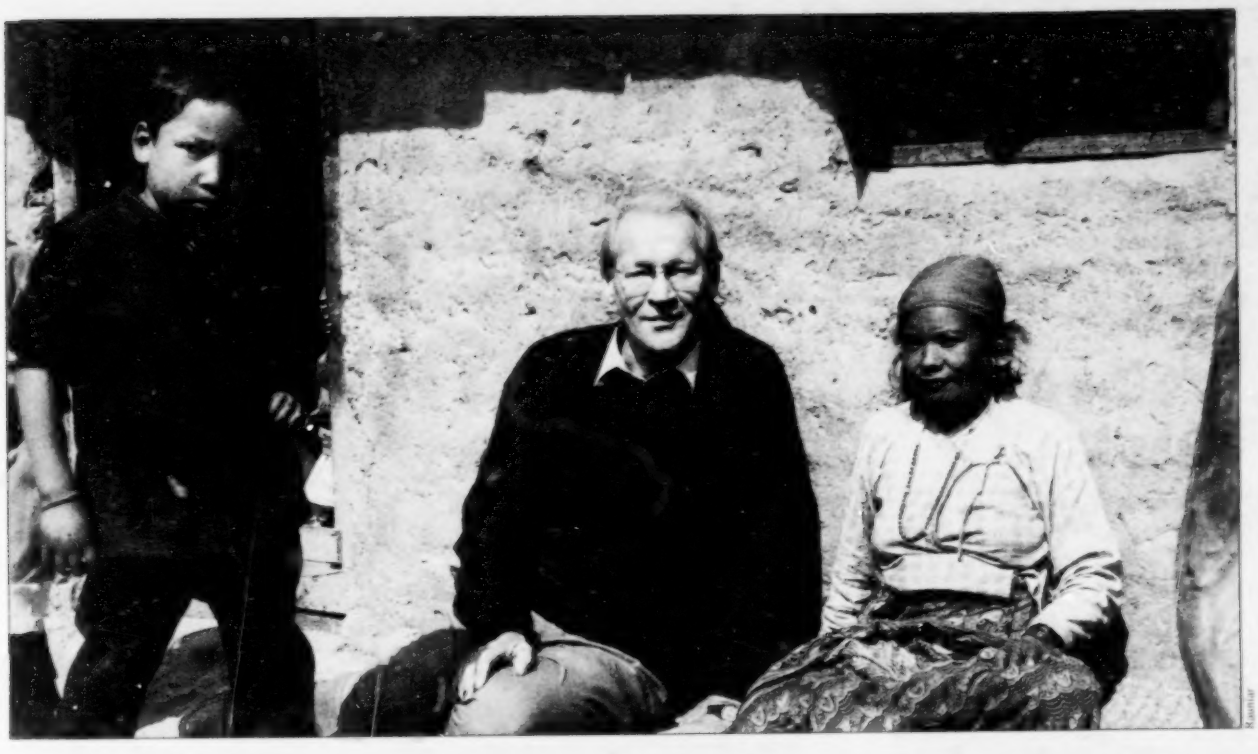

I have, personally or professionally, no difficulty in saying that the whole business of UNICEF is to take sides. Working for the weak *is* a political decision.

Karl-Eric Knutsson with his neighbours in Kathmandu.

South Asia must reduce gender inequity, exploitation, says UNICEF Regional Director

Karl-Eric Knutsson, Regional Director of the UNICEF South Asia Regional Office (ROSA), recently talked to Kanak Mani Dixit, Editor of the South Asian Magazine* Himal, *in Kathmandu, and Patricia Lone, Editor of* First Call for Children *in New York, about development trends in the subcontinent and the role of UNICEF.

Does South Asia receive international attention in proportion to its population size and development problems?
More than a quarter of the world's children live in South Asia and the cruel fact is that they suffer in greater proportions all the ills that threaten the survival and impair the development of children. More children in South Asia suffer from more incidents of severe diarrhoea, and from malnutrition in all its various forms, both in terms of too little food and lack of vital micronutrients. More children are born retarded because of the lack of iodine.

To this should be added that many tens of millions of children in South Asia are exploited as cheap or bonded labour, often working 12 to 16 hours a day, seven days a week. And perhaps even more appalling is the widespread discrimination against girl children, who get less of everything than even poverty can offer and who often, as a result, are denied survival itself.

The situation for children in acute emergencies, such as in Africa, is terrible and needs our constant attention; but in terms of constant severe suffering for a tremendous number of children, South Asia is where it is happening. There is no doubt that we must respond to the 'loud' emergencies, but it would be tragic, not to say ironic, if we forgot the unrelenting 'silent' emergencies which UNICEF brought to the world's attention in the 1980s.

What would you consider the three most important priorities in working for the children of South Asia?
First I would put the entire gender and equity issue. Second I would place the building of human capacity through basic education for all, particularly for girls and young women. Third would be the strategic need to bring attention and energies together on the level where people live. After all, people do not live at the international, regional, national or even the district level, but in communities.

In international circles, there is much talk about people's participation, as if this were an invention by some outside experts. Of course, it does not take much imagination to realize that every human community is an expression of people's participation for common interests. But to achieve a true participatory approach, it is not enough to leave all responsibility to the local community. There has to be an appropriate mix of political support, professional skills and what I call 'popular competence'. Planning and action need to be based in the local community, and the community needs the chance to document its own situation, plan, make decisions and allocate resources.

South Asia has the material resources to cope with survival and development, but our major resource – the ocean of human capability – is tragically neglected.

How are the priorities you cite being addressed by the region's communities, governments and international agencies?
The communities have the will, the knowledge and a lot of untapped energy, but these need to be complemented with additional knowledge, organization and resources.

At the government level, the resources and the possibilities are there, but what is lacking in many cases is the will or perhaps the ability to move from rhetoric to action.

As for international agencies, they are fairly outspoken on the gender issue. On education, I do not feel that the agencies, including UNICEF, have been able to follow up on the World Conference on Education for All in Jomtien. And this raises the question: Are international agencies able to cooperate with countries in an effective way when it comes to complex issues?

Immunization, infrastructure, a dam, a school building — all these can be done with relative ease. But when it comes to complex social and political issues, such as releasing children from some of their economic roles so that they can attend school, or when it involves mobilizing governments for education, the external agencies face many difficulties.

And, as is often the case, the powerful blame the victims. Experts proclaim loudly that parents need to be mobilized. But often the best and most committed mobilizers are parents, and they would send their children to school provided education is effective and relevant, provided teachers come to school, provided there are enough women teachers for their daughters.

Or experts say, blaming the victims, that the school system doesn't work because children 'drop out'. The truth is that both parents and communities constantly evaluate the educational system, and when it doesn't work or when it doesn't make sense, children are *pulled* out.

Let us start our analysis from this perspective, instead of fooling each other with some kind of educational variant of Newton's law, that poor children have a tendency to 'drop out'.

The real tendency is that poor children are offered poor or useless education. This is a complex issue. UNICEF can assist by facilitating successful experiments on the community level and by sharing experiences of successful programmes within and between countries.

What is ROSA's role at the regional level?
A lot can be gained from articulating problems and sharing experiences on a regional basis. We can help promote creative and constructive comparisons between the countries of the region. If Bhutan can institute an advanced educational system, one which is much less rigid and authoritarian, or to use a popular phrase these days, more 'children-friendly', then why can't countries with much larger personnel and financial resources do the same?

Then, there are the politically more sensitive issues of the Convention on the Rights of the Child, which has now been ratified by all the countries of South Asia. Here, strong advocacy by an international organization can easily be labelled as meddling in politics and taking sides. I have, personally or professionally, no difficulty in saying that the whole business of UNICEF is to take sides. Working for the weak *is* a political decision. However, it is not a national or party-political stance that we are taking, and that comes out more clearly if we push these issues at a regional level.

Is there any other comparative advantage in taking a regional approach?
The United Nations is full of benign talk about capacity-building. My own view is that it is empty if we do not start with *capacity utilization*. This region has one of the highest resource capacities in every field. And so ROSA has begun, in a small way, facilitating panels of people and institutions from all over the region to come together and advise UNICEF on policy and programmes. It is in utilizing the human resource capacity of South Asia that I feel we can develop a long-term strategy for UNICEF's presence there, which should ultimately make that presence unnecessary.

The South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation (SAARC) recently held a high-level conference and adopted a very important resolution for South Asia, called the 'Colombo Resolution'. Was UNICEF involved in this?
Let me begin by reminding us that the real inspiration for the World Summit for Children was the 1986 SAARC Conference on the Future of the South Asian Child. Six years after this Conference, the leaders of SAARC wanted to assess what had happened and also what had not happened. Therefore, they called a second SAARC Conference on Children of South Asia in Colombo last September.

UNICEF was asked to support this exercise, which we were very happy to do behind the scenes, so to speak,

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UNICEF/Murray-Lee

Shyamol (centre) with his two brothers. His mother's iodine deficiency worsened over the years and Shyamol was born a cretin as a result.

Bangladesh nears iodization target

By Maggie Murray-Lee

Shyamol is eight years old. He can neither hear, speak nor walk, and saliva dribbles continuously from his mouth. Down the road at the primary school of the village of Rampur (Bangladesh), where his father has been assistant teacher for 19 years, four out of five students have pronounced goitres. Both Shyamol's cretinism — a serious form of mental retardation— and the children's goitres are caused by iodine deficiency.

In Bangladesh, especially in the foothills of the Himalayas, iodine deficiency is widespread. The monsoons that flood the country almost every year, and which are partly responsible for the country's exceptional fertility, wash the heavily tilled soil bare of iodine.

Yet a mere three grams — less than a dollar's worth — of this 'supernutrient' will keep a person healthy for 60 years. The cheapest way to replace the lost iodine is to add it to the salt that everyone, even the poorest people, eat. Most salt is shipped from the salt pans on the coast and processed in Dhaka, where laborious hand-washing to remove mud eliminates all the marine salt's natural iodine.

The Government of Bangladesh began addressing the problem in 1989 when it legislated compulsory iodization of all edible salt by the end of 1993. This meant that 265 salt-crushing factories needed machines to mix potassium iodate into the salt.

The machines available in the region were unsuitable, so the Government requisitioned new prototypes, built by the government-owned Bangladesh Machine Tools Factory and a private company, Ispahani Marshall Ltd., and then tested by the University of Engineering and Technology.

The machines can produce eight tons of iodized salt an hour, or two 75-kilo bags a minute, and they are provided to the salt-crushing factories free of charge. By the end of 1992, there were 92 in operation, at a cost of less than US$13,000 each (in contrast to US$35,000 for imported ones).

UNICEF has now ordered the remaining 173 machines, which should be in place by the end of the year, and is also providing five years' supply of potassium iodate.

To convince everyone involved of the need for salt iodization, the Government and UNICEF developed an orientation kit and held workshops for factory managers, government employees, medical professionals and non-governmental organizations working at the grass-roots level.

Mr. M.A. Mannan, who manages

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Salt producers join governments to end iodine deficiency

By David P. Haxton

At the World Summit for Children in September 1990, world leaders accepted the recommendation of scientists that iodine deficiency disorders (IDD) could be eliminated. The follow-up Montreal conference of senior government officials entitled 'Ending Hidden Hunger' in October 1991 reaffirmed that it should be done.

Now, alliances between private producers of salt and government bodies responsible for public health and food protection must see that it gets done.

It is well known that the most efficient method of assuring adequate intake of iodine over time at acceptable cost to large populations is through the production and marketing of iodized salt.

Salt, like other edibles, is a product of the market, and for the most part, the mining, processing, packaging and marketing of salt is in the hands of private entrepreneurs.

Most of the actions required to assure adequate supplies of appropriately iodized salt must be taken at the national level by governments and industry.

New potential tapped

The idea of working directly with private industry for a public health intervention is new to government officials, development agencies and private management, so it will require some orientation to take full advantage of opportunities.

As confidence grows in the iodization of salt — a rather simple production process — both governments and private industry will see challenges to fortify other foods and to 'double fortify', for instance salt with iodine and fluoride. Other food products can also be fortified, such as sugar or tea with vitamin A, and flour with iron.

Producers can be encouraged to: iodize salt to national standards; improve packaging; assist in creating public demand; assist in sustaining political commitment; provide technical and other support to national endeavours; help draft new legislation mandating the iodization of salt (as in Guatemala); consider multiple fortification of salt (as in Costa Rica); help promote the goals of the World Summit; encourage agriculturists to demand iodized salt for animals; and collaborate with IDD training in the country and abroad.

Progress to date

Bolivia and Bhutan are very close to being able to report "no new cases." Both used iodized oil injections to protect people while iodized salt production increased to reach markets in all villages.

In Ecuador, alliances with the private sector, with major emphasis on social communications and the agricultural sector, have been key elements in success.

A number of governments have made the elimination of IDD a greater priority; Indonesia, for example, tripled its budget for IDD elimination.

The Canadian International Development Agency (CIDA) recognized early the need for aggressive action to eliminate IDD through bilateral efforts, through UNICEF and the International Council for Control of Iodine Deficiency Diseases (ICCIDD). It gave Bangladesh comprehensive support, covering survey costs, equipment design and production, training needs, quality assurance, research, evaluation and monitoring.

The Swedish International Development Agency (SIDA) has supported national programmes, such as one in the United Republic of Tanzania, for training, salt iodization, improved packaging and advocacy, which have led to significant progress.

A number of non-governmental organizations (NGOs) in Germany support a range of activities, most significantly in Ethiopia. The Netherlands supports training in food technology and other fields and provides direct country programme support as well as support for relevant publications through ICCIDD.

Belgian assistance in training, surveys and national programme support has been significant in African countries as well as a key to the outstanding progress reported in Ecuador. France has been active in innovative approaches to iodization of drinking water in small rural villages in Mali.

And in the US in 1992, foreign aid legislation contained for the first time specific reference to IDD, and the United States Agency for International Development (USAID) announced a US$50 million initiative for deficiencies of iodine, vitamin A and iron. The World Bank is beginning to include support for elimination of micronutrient malnutrition in the loans it makes. It has also been active in forming the micronutrient initiative, based at the International Development Research Centre, with support from UNICEF and the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP).

Iodine: education investment

The role iodine plays in normal human growth and development is especially significant because it is directly related to brain growth. Because of this relationship between 'iodine quantity' and 'intelligence quotient (IQ)', investments in education in countries

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Survey finds IDD prevalence high in Namibia

A nationwide micronutrient survey of nearly 2,000 schoolchildren in Namibia found moderate to serious iodine deficiencies. In the northern region of Caprivi, more than 50 per cent of the population showed evidence of goitre; in the northwest, where most of Namibia's people live, the rate of goitre prevalence was 20 to 30 per cent. Goitre affected up to 10 per cent of people in the less densely populated south.

The country intends to iodize all salt for human and animal consumption. Towards this end, UNICEF recently presented the Minister of Health and Social Services with a ton of potassium iodate for delivery to a salt producer. To meet the urgent needs of people in the Caprivi region while salt is being iodized, the Government will distribute iodized oil supplements.

The survey also revealed that vitamin A deficiency was a major problem nationwide.

Scandinavia struggles to maintain high levels of assistance

The Scandinavian countries have long distinguished themselves by their developmental generosity, with official development assistance (ODA) levels close to or above 1 per cent of their gross national product (GNP), surpassing the United Nations target of 0.7 per cent. HARALD MUNTHE-KAAS reports on their commitment, and how the economic crisis now rocking these States is affecting it.

Why do the small democracies at the northern periphery of Europe seem to be more sympathetic to the development needs and problems of the South than other countries at comparable levels of development and wealth? Will the Scandinavian welfare States be able to sustain their high levels of development aid through the economic crises currently rocking their foundations?

Judging by the 1993 development aid budgets of the three Scandinavian countries and the public debate surrounding their adoption, the will may still be there in leading political circles. Their ability to stay the course in the long run is another question.

Sweden has been forced by a sharp economic downturn to reduce foreign development assistance to 0.9 per cent in 1993 from the 1992 level of 1 per cent of GNP, and Norway's development aid is down by 0.7 per cent to 1.02 per cent. Denmark alone has maintained a level of 1 per cent of GNP.

The reductions are, of course, mild compared with the dramatic cut from 0.76 per cent to 0.4 per cent that their Nordic neighbour Finland has been forced to make, and those made by many other donor countries.

As recently as 1990 Norway set the record among industrialized countries, with its ODA reaching 1.17 per cent of GNP. At the same time, Denmark and Sweden were just below the 1 per cent mark. That was the equivalent of each person in Denmark giving US$230, in Norway $287 and in Sweden $234 per year for development in the South. In contrast, Japan's per capita 1990 contribution was $73, Germany's $79 and the United States' $45.

Roots of support

Norway's Foreign Minister Thorvald Stoltenberg maintains that, for small nations like the Scandinavian countries, solidarity is an integral part of foreign policy. "With solidarity I do not mean charity from the world's rich to the world's poor, but the recognition of commonality of interest within the global community ... Our development aid must be seen in this light; it is part of our own future security."

But even this concept of 'extended security' does not fully explain why the Scandinavians consistently, and at no little sacrifice, have paid not just lip service but also the bills that come with support for ideals of greater international understanding and development. Fully four fifths of the countries' populations have supported generous development aid for a long time.

Non-governmental organizations (NGOs) were strong movers for development aid in the 1950s, spurring politicians to get aid flowing. They continue to influence Scandinavian development aid programmes today, educating people through information activities in schools, trade unions and other channels.

Christian Kelm-Hansen, former Danish parliamentarian and board chairman of the Danish International Development Agency (DANIDA) — recognized for his strong influence on Denmark's development policies — says credit for the strong support for ODA must primarily go to the labour movement and the Social Democrats. In Scandinavia, these movements helped develop the welfare state, with its emphasis on solidarity, democracy and equality. These values, extending beyond national borders, oblige the richer nations to share resources and help create a more just world.

Scandinavian assistance, to a large extent, also followed in the footsteps of the early missionaries, who opened the eyes of northern citizens to the plight of people in the South and to their responsibility to help.

Changing times, changing policies

The end of the cold war and the profound changes in the world order have spurred debates among the Scandinavians about whether development aid strategies needed revising.

In an interview last autumn, the Foreign Minister of Sweden's centre-right coalition Government, Margaretha af Ugglas, envisaged the need for future aid policies to reflect "stronger emphasis on democracy and human rights in recipient countries, stronger support for market policies," as well as a need for linking aid to recipient countries' military spending.

This has now become official policy and the Under-Secretary for Foreign Aid, Alf Samuelsson, has recently said that Sweden will begin applying stricter controls and might penalize countries failing to live up to such requirements. At the same time, the Swedish International Development Agency (SIDA) was strongly criticized for inefficiency in a recent study commissioned by the Government, and many politicians see a clear need for stronger oversight by parliament.

The Norwegians are also debating foreign aid policy, but Norway's governing Social Democrats have not thus far signalled any sharp policy changes. A recent white paper and the expected appointment of a special development aid commission, however, may lead to revisions. Norway's Stoltenberg, a veteran international development aid strategist, admits personally having had a hard time adjusting to the need for placing demands on poor developing countries. While accepting it, he insists that such demands must not be allowed to hurt the most vulnerable population groups. At the same time he affirms that his country will continue to be among the top aid donors, adding, "I hope others will soon join us up there at 1 per cent of GNP."

A school-age child in Nigeria: Education is a major development challenge.

Still the top

The Scandinavian countries continue to top the list of donor countries and retain their strong commitment, even though two of them have cut development aid. The United Nations system is likely to receive nearly half of all Scandinavian aid funds — which have reached annual levels of more than US$4 billion -- in the foreseeable future, subject to closer scrutiny on how it uses those resources and how it improves the efficiency of its operations.

Three UN organizations — UNICEF, the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA) and the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) — are clearly favoured by the Scandinavian countries for their performance and because they cover the countries' top priority area of human development.

These organizations show "rising levels of competence," according to the head of DANIDA, Henrik Woehlk. "We feel that we have had an influence on their policies, that our ideas have been accepted."

Sweden's Margaretha af Ugglas singles out UNICEF for praise as an organization that really "works in the field and reaches the most exposed groups. That is why it gets so much Swedish support."

In the 1970s and 1980s, the group of so-called 'like-minded countries' — among them the Nordics, the Netherlands and Canada — were in the forefront among industrialized nations in trying to shape international consensus and action for North-South development cooperation and assistance into a 'New International Economic World Order' (NIEWO).

Stoltenberg, who — with the Netherlands' Jan Pronk — was one of the architects of the NIEWO concept in the 1970s, today has a different vision. Instead of a new global economic order imposed from above, he now wants to see a new economic world order emerge from below, through widespread regional cooperation, a trend he sees in many parts of the world.

"People may say I am much too optimistic in presenting such a scenario," he says. "That is a reaction I can understand, but the alternative is total failure. We have to have a global vision."

Harald Munthe-Kaas is a Norwegian development journalist and senior editor at Norwegian Broadcasting in Oslo.

HEALTH NOTES

Breastfeeding protects growth

Diarrhoeal disease can take a heavy toll on a child's growth, but breastfed infants are protected even when they do get diarrhoea, according to recent findings. In exploring the relationship between energy intake and diarrhoeal disease, and their effects on child growth, authors of a paper note this protective factor and emphasize the need for exclusive breastfeeding during and after bouts of diarrhoea through the first four months of infancy, and partial breastfeeding for 24 months (*Food and Nutrition Bulletin*, Vol. 14, No. 1, March 1992).

Vitamin A cuts childhood mortality dramatically

Results of six clinical trials in Asia over the past decade have shown that children receiving supplemental vitamin A experienced, on average, a 34 per cent reduction in rate of mortality over that of children not given the vitamin. In three of the trials, dramatic reductions in deaths associated with diarrhoea and measles were noted. In African trials involving children suffering from measles, those who received vitamin A died at less than half the rate of children who received routine therapy.

First infant sex selection clinic in Europe

Using a technique of sperm separation developed in the US, which improves the chances of a couple's giving birth to a child of a desired sex, two doctors have begun treating couples at the London Gender Clinic. Tests have shown the treatment has a 75 per cent success rate in producing boys and a 70 per cent success rate for girls. About 50 clinics are using the technique in the US, while the London clinic is the first of its kind in Europe. A concern about the technique is that it reinforces gender prejudices. Out of the first seven couples attending the clinic in London, five wanted baby boys.

Italy's radical tactics

By Baher Kamal

When Emma Bonino launched a campaign in the early 1980s to force the Italian Government to provide more money for children around the world, she used unconventional methods.

The feisty Deputy of the Italian Radical Party spent sleepless nights filibustering in parliament and at one point spoke non-stop for over 36 hours — without food and water. Her actions set the stage for a civil disobedience movement that included hunger strikes and massive protest marches outside the Vatican and government institutions.

Bonino recalled late last year that it was data presented by UNICEF on International Children's Day in 1979 that triggered the Radical Party's campaign. The figures revealed that one third of those at risk of starvation that year were children.

The campaign for more aid continued for five years into the late 1980s and focused on three main demands:

- first, that Italy meet its promised aid to developing countries of 0.7 per cent of its gross domestic product (GDP);
- second, that an additional 0.7 per cent of its GDP be earmarked for children; and
- third, that a compensation fund be created to make up for a decade of failures on the part of the industrialized North to keep its promises to the developing South.

The campaign elicited a remarkable response from the Italian Government and from then Foreign Minister Emilio Colombo, in particular. Colombo greatly increased Italy's participation in UNICEF and helped, among other things, to generate US$85 million for a pilot project on nutrition and US$15 million for essential drugs, a first step towards what is now the Bamako Initiative.

Italian aid overall ballooned from US$200 million (0.06 per cent of GDP) in 1979 to about US$4 billion (0.34 per cent of GDP) in 1992, and the volume of aid specifically for children in the developing world grew from US$4.8 million in 1981 to US$44.2 million.

Colombo was replaced in 1983 by Giulio Andreotti, who continued to support UNICEF and introduced two new laws paving the way for the Fondo Aiuti Italiani (FAI) to address emergencies, and the rationalization of development cooperation. In June of 1985, FAI and Andreotti promised UNICEF US$100 million to immunize children in Africa. That commitment grew to US$150 million, opened the door to contributions from other donor countries, and helped to achieve universal child immunization (UCI) goals by 1990.

Three other Italian initiatives also drew praise: a US$500 million bilateral programme for Sahelian countries; a large refugee programme with the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) in Central America; and the creation of the UNICEF International Child Development Centre at the Spedale degli Innocenti in Florence.

Aid momentum has plummeted since then, however. Priorities for Africa and the poorest nations were gradually abandoned in favour of large interventions in middle- and higher-income countries. Attention shifted towards Eastern Europe and contributions to multilateral institutions such as UNDP and UNICEF were frozen. By the end of 1992, a serious financial crisis and the subsequent austerity policy cut the budget for 1993 by more than half.

The struggle to raise more money for children continues, however. Arnaldo Farina, a mine of ideas and initiatives, has been President of the Italian Committee for UNICEF since "the good old days." The key to success then and now, he believes, is to raise awareness of children's needs and tap into the public's proven willingness to help.

In August of 1991, the Italian Committee launched a major media campaign on behalf of child victims of the war and drought in Somalia. Another of Farina's initiatives has been to encourage mayors of cities throughout the world to become the "defenders of children." His move has drawn enthusiastic support from some 300 mayors in Italy and from many others globally.

Italy's commitment to children is reflected in other ways as well. Margherita Boniver, a Socialist Cabinet Minister, has joined with other parliamentarians and leaders of major Italian labour unions on a 'Parliamentary and Labour Initiative Committee' of the Italian Committee for UNICEF. And the country's non-governmental organizations remain as committed as ever and almost everyone has taken heart from a major new appointment to the Italian Cabinet last year.

Emilio Colombo, the man who started it all with a vision for children, is back as Foreign Minister. The economy is a formidable obstacle this time around, but Colombo is a realist, and maybe this is the time for the Italian 'Cooperazione' to take on human development as its first priority. As one Scandinavian Ambassador to the United Nations put it: "Nowadays you have to be a realist to believe in miracles."

Baher Kamal is an Inter Press Service correspondent in Rome.

When love is not enough

By Thalif Deen

Virginia Gray, a strong advocate for children, was waiting outside a congressional committee room in Washington, D.C., in 1961, hoping to alert senators about a potential threat to reduce government funding for children.

As then-Senator Hubert H. Humphrey walked down the corridor, she grabbed him by his arm and pleaded, "Senator, don't forget the children."

"Don't worry, Virginia," replied the liberal Democrat from Minnesota who later became US Vice President, "Everybody loves children."

"But, Senator," insisted the one-time lobbyist for the Citizen's Committee for UNICEF, "love is not enough. We need money."

Gray eventually went on to write perhaps the most definitive book on American fund-raising efforts for UNICEF. The book was appropriately titled, *Love Is Not Enough: Recollections of a Capitol Hill Lobbyist for UNICEF*.

In an interview late last year, Gray said the Citizen's Committee she worked for launched one of the most intensive lobbying campaigns to raise money for the cause of children in the 1960s and 1970s, a tough fight at the height of the cold war.

"Almost any headlines from the United Nations — whether a speech in the General Assembly or action by the Security Council — that could be interpreted as contrary to US interests, could become an excuse for a hostile attitude towards UNICEF," Gray wrote.

Despite this, fund-raising efforts on behalf of children have gone on to phenomenal success.

"I don't recall any cuts being made by Congress on funding for children," said Fran Goodwin, a legislative assistant to Senator Nancy Kassenbaum. Although Congress sharply cut the overall foreign aid bill — from $22 billion in fiscal year 1985 to $13.9 billion in fiscal year 1993 — US spending for the well-being of children throughout the world has actually increased.

Contributions from the US — mostly from the federal Government and to a lesser extent from non-governmental organizations (NGOs) and individuals — continued to flow uninterrupted even during the global recession of the 1980s. If the cause is good — and it involves children — the money is always there, says Alex J. Palacios, Director of the US Committee for UNICEF in Washington.

The numbers bear him out. The annual US contribution to UNICEF rose from $51.1 million in fiscal year 1987 to $65.4 million in fiscal year 1990. In fiscal year 1991, Congress approved $75 million for UNICEF and for 1993 about $100 million, almost double the amount committed in 1987.

A staff assistant to the House Appropriations Committee, mentioning that the well-being of children has been a "top priority of Congress," named Representative David Obey (Wisconsin Democrat), chairman of the House subcommittee for foreign operations, and Senator Patrick Leahy (Vermont Democrat) as very dedicated supporters of UNICEF in Congress.

Palacios described the World Summit for Children in September 1990 as a turning point. The 71 Heads of State and Government, including then-President George Bush, publicly committed themselves to specific goals for children.

Conscious of the ongoing crisis in Africa, Congress also earmarked an additional $80 million last year as Special Assistance to Africa, to be administered by the United States Agency for International Development (USAID).

The USAID monies for the Child Survival Programme, disbursed mostly through NGOs, have also increased from $200 million in 1991 to $275 million in fiscal year 1993.

And the chief executives of some of America's largest corporations answered the Summit's call to action by forming the US Committee for UNICEF's Corporate Alliance for Child Survival.

The primary aim of the Alliance — currently numbering over 30 US companies — is to enlist the support of other business leaders on behalf of children.

Now the new Administration has already expressed its own strong support for children's causes. A proposal currently under consideration calls for the government purchase of childhood vaccines and their distribution free of charge to doctors and clinics.

The Clinton Administration has also indicated it will sign and ratify the Convention on the Rights of the Child, reversing the Bush Administration's position.

Palacios expressed optimism over the new US attitude towards children and said the upcoming foreign aid bill and the funding proposals for UNICEF in fiscal year 1995 will be important areas to watch.

Thalif Deen is the UN-based Development Editor for the third world news agency, Inter Press Service.

RESEARCH DIGEST

Available resources debate

Implementing the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child: Resource Mobilization and the Obligations of the States Parties, by James R. Himes, Innocenti Occasional Papers, Child Rights Series, Number 2 (Florence, November 1992).

For many children around the world, the degree to which the rights and protections enshrined in the Convention on the Rights of the Child are translated into concrete form will depend in large part on the resources countries make available. James R. Himes, Director of the UNICEF International Child Development Centre in Florence (Italy), sets the tone and focus of what promises to be an ongoing debate on the crucial issue of resources in this paper. Resources certainly can be, but do not have to be, he says, an excuse for feeble or failed policy on children's rights.

Article 4 of the Convention is central to the question:

"States Parties shall undertake all appropriate legislative, administrative, and other measures for the implementation of the rights recognized in the present Convention. With regard to economic, social and cultural rights, States Parties shall undertake such measures to the maximum extent of their available resources and, where needed, within the framework of international cooperation."

Himes concedes the problems that the qualifying phrase "available resources" could create. But he points to the most current analysis of the Convention — the *Commentary on the Convention on the Rights of the Child in 1989*, by Philip Alston, now in production — which, he says, finds States Parties obliged, regardless of resource constraints, to ensure children a minimal essential level of each right. A lack of resources, in other words, is not an excuse for dereliction of duty.

And awareness among child rights advocates and concerned policy makers, Himes argues, can go a long way to guaranteeing that children's rights find positive and creative implementation.

For example, resources, instead of being seen as strictly economic or financial, should be understood broadly and dynamically. Knowledge and skills of families are crucial resources. So, too, are the organizational strengths present in local communities and the management, leadership and political skills to be found at the village, city and national levels.

The question of who controls a society's resources is also key, Himes contends, adding that research into this area is crucial.

Goals, achievable within agreed time frames, are important in helping bring the Convention to life, as are the national programmes of action (NPAs) countries have prepared or are preparing. And the participation of communities, families and children themselves in formulating goals and programmes will be instrumental in building the consensus needed for progress.

VIPP: Cards, truth and masking tape

By Afsan Chowdhury

VIPP, a work-planning method developed by the Public Communication and Information Section of UNICEF Dhaka, is producing a chorus of approval from those using it.

"For the first time in my life I felt I was in control," said one.

"(It is) a new way to solve problems, all problems," confirmed another. And a third heralded it as a way of "finding a voice, our own voice."

Cards, charts, boards, pins, gum, glue, scissors, masking tape, consensus and plenty of synergistic energy are the tools that visualization in people's participation (VIPP) employs.

To those who know the German ZOPP method, especially the use of cards and charts, the technique may sound familiar. VIPP, however, is not ZOPP; it's more participatory and adaptable, less rigid or structured and in many ways more creative.

Silence is not golden

In highly structured and conservative cultures, the weak, shy, timid or less powerful often find themselves required to listen and listen and listen, when plans are being made.

VIPP tries to change that. Because it involves writing and then speaking as a group, VIPP prevents 'leader'-dominated meetings and circularity of discussion and gives a voice to those who rarely get a chance to speak.

How VIPP works

A standard VIPP workshop begins with the formulation of the objective, which serves as the steering-wheel of the exercise. The objective isn't formulated arbitrarily, but instead cards and pins are used, which help introduce participants to the method.

Participants (the ideal number is between 20 and 30) are divided into groups. Everyone is given a set of colour-coded cards on which to write ideas and problems related to the objective. There are only two basic rules: Participants must write only one idea per card, and each idea must be expressed in no more than three lines per card. People can write as many cards as they want.

Participants then pin the cards up on boards so all may see the ideas. Duplicate ideas/cards are removed at a later stage of the group work, when participants collectively move the cards around to cluster or collapse a set of similar ideas or write a new card incorporating many ideas into one.

The method eliminates the possibility of one individual dominating, as well as the concept that there is a 'best' idea. All cards are pinned up, and the group, not an individual, decides which cards stay and which are removed.

VIPP focuses discussion because, as the cards are always visible, one doesn't have to rely on memory. Precision is improved because cards demand brevity and concise articulation. And the work is completed much more efficiently.

As mentioned, the cards are colour-coded. In Bangladesh, pink cards are used to designate problems; green and blue are used to set goals; and yellow to define strategies. From the strategy cards flow the activities cards, which spell out the specifics — what, who, when and how much — required to reach each objective.

Facilitators: Keeping the process flowing

An integral part of VIPP is the facilitator, who ensures that the process keeps flowing from problem to solution to action through the use of cards, without directing content or conclusions.

This part-time counsellor and 'know-nothing' guru asks questions about the issues and strategies identified. Is a problem related to the overall objective? Will a strategy help reach an objective or is it more a declaration of intent? Are the actions proposed realistic? Who will implement them? Are resources sufficient to execute them?

The facilitator challenges participants to think and reconsider and assists them in reaching their goal, but without imposing anything except the rules of work. And he or she functions as an equal because the number-one rule in VIPP is "there is no boss."

Final decisions are made in plenary session. Each group presents its findings — often through role playing and other non-formal methods — and the verdict is given by all the others. It is the most intense and electrifying part of the workshop, where group and corporate will and need prevail. Adjustments are made at each step so that what emerges most closely reflects collective wisdom.

Benefits spreading

VIPP is proving infectious. In Bangladesh, UNICEF is using it extensively, as are non-governmental organizations and other groups. Training workshops in the method have been held and more are planned, but even without formal training, adherents are growing.

VIPP's card and chart method is also being used to supplement training activities; cards capture what experts say in lectures, summarize the contributions of resource persons and help in reviewing audiovisual aids.

From Bangladesh where it began, VIPP is also now being used in Bhutan, Egypt and East Africa. A manual is being developed, also in a participatory manner, with guidelines for VIPP facilitators.

In these days, when 'community participation' is a consideration, the method helps ensure that many different 'communities' have a say and that participation is not just another agenda imposed from above by people who do not plan in a participatory manner themselves. At the grass-roots level, VIPP has great potential.

Afsan Chowdhury is Communications/Information Officer, UNICEF Dhaka.

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continued from page 2

because it is very important that the countries themselves express their sense of commitment and ownership of processes like this.

To prepare for the Conference, we brought together parliamentarians, journalists, educators, health workers, religious figures, women's activists and people involved in children's rights to form what we called '12 panels of excellence'. Their preparatory work and recommendations helped ensure that the Conference was a step in an ongoing process rather than an event in which luminaries in lecture halls talked about poverty.

The Resolution that emerged from Colombo became a strong and moving commitment by the nations and peoples of South Asia to the major goals for child development and to help each other in achieving them.

What worries you most about societal trends in South Asia?

I am most worried about the tremendous distance growing between the have-nots and the rapidly emerging middle and upper middle classes ... Among intellectuals, social activists and politicians, I have picked up one overwhelming sentiment: That South Asia has the material resources to cope with survival and development, but our major resource — the ocean of human capability — is tragically neglected.

I sometimes ask myself where South Asia would have been today if education had been emphasized since the time of independence. Most countries in the region wrote the right to basic primary education into their constitutions, but, apart from Sri Lanka, the provisions remained to a great extent rhetorical.

Also, in the subcontinent, there are perhaps nearly 100 million child labourers — exploited children denied the right to education, play, sunshine, laughter. Information about such problems as child labour and gender discrimination is spreading very fast around the world and causing reactions. For example, many carpet manufacturers who use child labour are beginning to be boycotted in important markets.

If South Asia itself does not deal with such issues as gender inequity, child exploitation and so on, it will face difficulties in its relations with the rest of the world. And the prejudices that will be created will be politically harmful and economically very damaging.

Where will UNICEF place its emphasis in the future?

Our first goal is to see to it that at least we are not destructive. We are members of an international development industry that unfortunately comes from traditions and power centres which also produced colonialism and neocolonialism. We are part of this historical process and we must be aware of this so that we do not become peddlars of outside prescriptions, which in the long run might turn out to be detrimental.

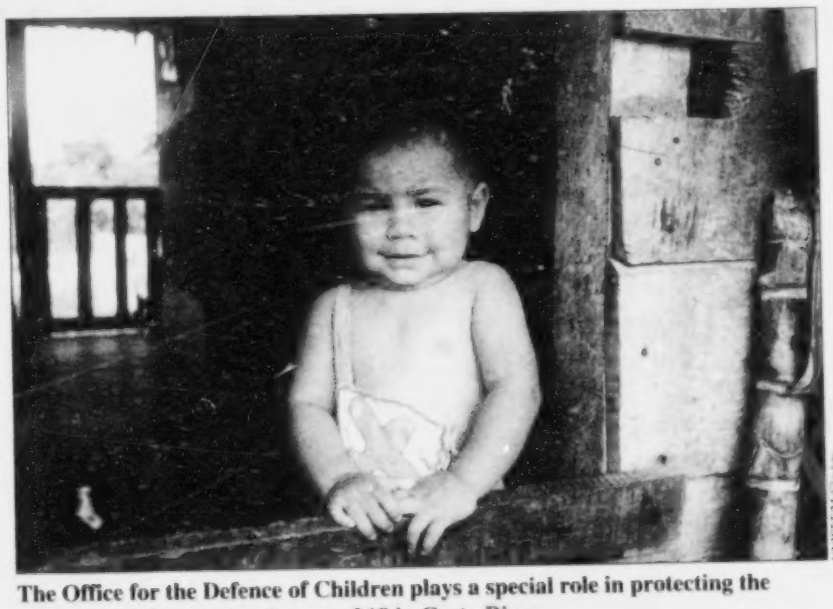
Secondly, in our aim to be helpful we must never forget that education and health are the foundations of a good and just society. The countries that have taken off economically have not done so because they had good economists, but because they emphasized education and primary health care. And they gave political and economic priority to those migrating towards the continent of the future — the children.

COSTA RICA

Special office protects children's rights

Problems with grades, unresponsive bureaucracies and physical or psychological abuse are some of the troubles a government bureau is helping solve for children. Its goal is to strengthen the rights of young people countrywide.

By Monica Nagel Berger



UNICEF/M.Grosby

The Office for the Defence of Children plays a special role in protecting the rights of children under the age of 18 in Costa Rica.

Children are protected by Costa Rica's Constitution, by ordinary law and also by the rights enshrined in the Convention on the Rights of the Child, which Costa Rica has ratified. At the same time, the Office for the Defence of Children plays a very special and particular role in protecting the rights of children under the age of 18, mediating between the various bodies and agencies of the Government that handle matters relating to children and the children themselves.

Costa Rica gave all children living within its territory this gift on 9 September 1987, the national Day of the Child. On that day the Office for the Defence of Children was established by Executive Order and later, in March 1990, by law.

A child or his/her legal representative can turn to the Office when the child's interests and rights are jeopardized, for example, as happened in a rural community, where two children were punished in public, causing them physical and psychological harm. The Office also guides public and private institutions in defence of the rights of boys and girls.

Agencies and courts for minors have many important protective functions. However, those agencies often are impeded by bureaucratic mechanisms and systems. The Office, on the other hand, was deliberately designed to be flexible and to cut through bottlenecks.

For example, a telephone call is all it takes to set the Office into action. The parties involved may visit the Office in person and follow up the contact in writing. The Office can negotiate with institutions or take action on its own when the rights of children or adolescents are at stake.

Structure of the Office

The Office for the Defence of Children is a component of the Department of Human Rights Protection, which also has offices for the defence of other groups, such as women. The Department is part of the Ministry of Justice but operates independently under the law.

The Office is headed by the Defender, who reports directly to the Ministry of Justice. There is a staff of assistants and administrative support personnel.

Funding for the Office for the Defence of Children is provided by the Ministry of Justice and through donations and cooperative agreements.

What the Office can do

When a child or his/her representative makes contact, the Office has three approaches to ensure that the problem is addressed.

The first is a *consultation*, in which the party involved, who may be a child or adolescent, parent or guardian or even a public official, is given guidance on the steps to be taken to achieve a particular goal, and where he or she may go to solve a problem. For example, a consultation was held concerning a student's disagreement with the grade he earned on an examination. The student was informed about the steps he could take to appeal the grade.

In the second approach, a *complaint* may be made about the actions of an agency concerning a child or adolescent, which may not have been carried out in a prompt and satisfactory manner.

Reports, the third option, involve situations in which the rights of a child or adolescent have been violated by the actions of a public official or an institution. The author of a report may be a child or adolescent, his legal representative or another party. The Office can request the superiors of the incriminated official or civil servant to establish the facts in the case, and, if necessary, to take disciplinary measures against the official.

In one case, the Office for the Defence of Children received a report concerning a teacher who had mistreated a child during a class. The Office, through its legal advisor, contacted the head of the Legal Department of the Ministry of Education to ensure that measures would be taken to discipline the teacher and that the incident would not be repeated.

Public officials are required by law to cooperate with the Office. If it is demonstrated that they have neglected their duties, they face punishment. Statutes also call for the dismissal of any official who commits a serious violation.

Thus, this programme offers minors a permanent, immediately available recourse when public offices violate their rights, whether by action or omission. It also informs and educates officials with reponsibility for caring for children about their obligations under the law.

Programme to promote child rights

The Office for the Defence of Children has inaugurated this programme of preventive action in order to decrease child abuse, strengthen the family and improve the care of children. Strategies include institutional and sectoral coordination, with conferences, workshops, seminars and round tables to inform participants about the rights of children. The press and news media are also involved, and educational charts, posters and pamphlets are being published.

Many educators, directors of educational establishments and supervisors have been trained in child rights through this programme, as have large numbers of middle and high-level administrative police officials, all of whom inform and educate their staff.

Within the community itself awareness has increased about situations that harm children, and appropriate solutions using community resources are being sought.

As a result, several communities have established Committees for the Protection of the Rights of the Child, composed of a range of community members from different economic and educational groups and officials of various community institutions.

Legislative review

Legal standards help solve social problems, but practices and customs change, as do social needs. The legal framework governing social activity, therefore, must be reviewed continuously.

In order to meet the needs of children today and in the future, the Office is creating a database of all national legislation on the rights of minors. The legislation will be analysed in the light of current social conditions, and necessary legal changes will be submitted to the legislature in accordance with the provisions of the Convention on the Rights of the Child.

The Office also contributes to proposals on policies on children, which will be of fundamental importance in deciding on the use of resources for programmes for the groups in greatest need, whose children suffer the greatest deprivations and limitations.

The Office for the Defence of Children has also participated in drafting Costa Rica's National Plan of Action for Human Development, Children and Youth, covering the next 10 years.

Monica Nagel Berger is Viceminister of Justice and Defender of Children in Costa Rica.

Children's broadcasting

The second International Children's Day of Broadcasting this year, on 12 December, will build on the successes and strengths of last year, when for the first time ever, broadcasters in 80 countries set aside a special day or, like the Caribbean Broadcasting Corporation, devoted a special week to children's issues. In Australia, the Day brought a new and exciting dimension to programming by the Australian Broadcasting Corporation (ABC), one of the earliest and staunchest supporters of the effort. Here DAVID HILL, Managing Director of ABC, describes the Day's success.

A sunny summer Sunday is not the best time for a festival of children's television programmes. The beach beckons and audiences can be expected to be small. So it came as a pleasant surprise to find that across Australia thousands of children and their families sat down together to enjoy the UNICEF International Children's Day of Broadcasting on the Australian Broadcasting Corporation (ABC) on 13 December.

ABC, one of the first broadcasters to express support for a special day of television to raise awareness of children's issues, devoted an afternoon to programmes for and about children. Some programmes were purchased from overseas; others were Australian. All were of the highest quality.

In the days leading up to it, the International Children's Day of Broadcasting was promoted in both children's and prime time shows with spots featuring UNICEF Goodwill Ambassadors, Australia National Committee for UNICEF Ambassador Ken Done and personalities from ABC's most popular shows for children and teenagers. The same people were featured in spots throughout the afternoon of the Day, reinforcing its messages.

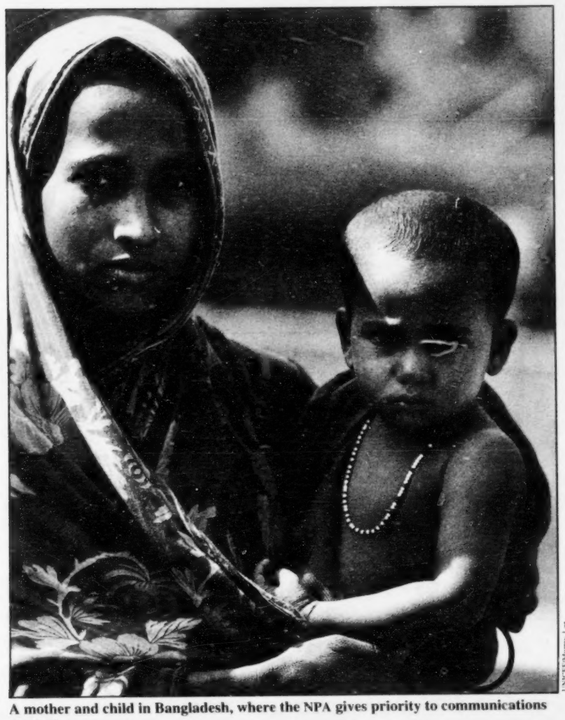
The line-up began at 1 p.m. with the UNICEF documentary, *One Day in September: The World Summit for Children*. Another documentary followed, *Just Imagine Making Lift-Off!*, which looked at the development and production of a new series with the same title designed to open the enquiring minds of children to new possibilities.

At 2 p.m. came *Grandpa*, a beautiful animation programme about the relationship between a little girl and her grandfather. Then, in *Windmill*, a young girl overcame her fears to climb a windmill, fix it and save her injured father's farm. *That Green Stuff* explored the dilemma of a girl who exposes the use of dangerous chemicals on a vegetable farm and processing plant, despite pressure from people afraid of losing their jobs on the farm. The next programme, dramatizing the troubles in Northern Ireland, showed the unlikely friendship between two members of rival teenage gangs. The afternoon concluded with *The Nutcracker*.

Although one viewer called to say she was distressed by some of the documentary material shown, the response to the Day was overwhelmingly positive. The programmes all ranked in the top 20 most popular ABC daytime programmes that week.

The Day gave a voice to children, one that was heard and heeded by tens of thousands of viewers across Australia.

Realistic targets set for mid-decade



UNICEF/Jimmy Lee

A mother and child in Bangladesh, where the NPA gives priority to communications strategies.

By Donald J. Casey

A group of Asian countries — all of which have completed their national programmes of action (NPAs) — accelerated their progress towards the decade goals by committing themselves to reach intermediate targets in the next few years *(please see box on page 9)*. Member countries of the South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation (SAARC) — Bangladesh, Bhutan, India, the Maldives, Nepal, Pakistan and Sri Lanka — took this important step at their second Conference on Children in South Asia, held in Colombo in September 1992.

This realistic approach is evident in most NPAs from Asia, whether final or still in preparation, which contain practical strategies for implementing projects, involving the private sector and NGOs, providing realistic cost estimates, monitoring progress, empowering women and focusing on the needs of the girl child.

Significant attention is given as well to the many problems of children in especially difficult circumstances (CEDC) and to ways of implementing the provisions of the Convention on the Rights of the Child.

Capacity-building

The process countries in Asia used in formulating their NPAs has varied. Large nations like **China** and **India** have strong planning processes already under way that include many of the concerns of the decade. They produced NPAs, therefore, that were short policy statements highlighting their objectives.

Less developed countries, such as **Bhutan**, **Nepal** and the **Lao People's Democratic Republic**, provided longer analyses of their problems and a richer menu of programmes and projects.

The region made the NPA process a major capacity-building effort involving many sectors of society — often for the first time — in a comprehensive approach to the needs of children and women. For example, the **Lao People's Democratic Republic** formulated its NPA during the major transition to a market-oriented economic system, which included the accelerated privatization of state-owned enterprises. The country's NPA consequently encourages private-sector and private-community initiatives in the social services sector, services previously provided exclusively by the Government. Similarly, **Myanmar's** NPA reflects the political and economic transformations it is encountering as it moves towards a multi-party democratic system.

Resources and sectoral priorities

Most Asian NPAs follow a global pattern of giving first priority to education, then to health and nutrition, and finally to water and sanitation projects *(see table, page 9)*.

Projected NPA costs range from a high of US$3.7 billion annually for the **Republic of Korea**, which is not asking for any external funding, to US$11.7 million a year for **Bhutan**. For many countries, estimating the costs of implementing NPAs both helps them attract additional resources for the programme and challenges them to find new, more creative ways of securing funding.

Nepal's NPA, for example, proposed a "social tax" on luxury imports to be used for primary health care, basic education and other NPA programmes. **Maldives** is considering a special levy on tourists to meet its needs. **Pakistan** intends to allocate some proceeds from its privatization of state enterprises to the social sectors. It also intends to encourage greater private-sector involvement in the industrial and economic sectors, freeing public funds for the social sectors.

Priority to communications

Very high priority is given to media and other communications components in **Bangladesh**'s NPA, which account for one quarter of the space devoted to strategies, and precede discussion of the other major sectoral priorities of the World Summit for Children (WSC) goals.

The media, government officials, multilateral and bilateral donors, NGOs, service clubs and voluntary societies are targeted to promote the goals of the NPA, implement the Convention, and encourage the development of women with emphasis on the girl child. Alliances are to be reinforced with key arts and entertainment personalities in a confederation called "We are for Children," which will promote awareness of the goals for children through national events and tours, television and radio programming and the print media.

The corporate community is asked to provide free advertising space and wide dissemination of logos of the promotion effort on their product packaging. The religious community, schools, women's groups and community organizations are all enlisted in the effort, according to their special capacities.

Effective monitoring; improving data

Provisions for monitoring progress towards national goals for the decade are among the most important aspects of NPAs. They are also often among the weaker aspects of many NPAs worldwide. The NPAs of more than 60 countries address this question. Almost all Asian NPAs treat it seriously.

Indonesia, Nepal and Sri Lanka provide for a systematic review of the indicators needed to measure progress toward each of the goals; for the collection of baseline data for each indicator; and for the creation of instruments to measure progress and fill the data gaps.

In **Indonesia**, the basic monitoring unit is the Village Resilience Institution, which will gauge community achievements in support of child survival, development and protection. Information from the Institution is sent to district and provincial levels, then to the appropriate ministry, and finally to the office of the President of the Republic.

Sri Lanka highlights 36 indicators for monitoring progress in women's and children's health, nutrition and education, and in protecting children in difficult circumstances, and sets timetables for monthly evaluation meetings and reviews by ministry and provincial officials, technical subcommittees and the National Development Committee. Quarterly review meetings are also scheduled for bilateral and multilateral donors.

Nepal proposes the creation of a high-level National Council for Child Development under the Prime Minister, with the National Planning Commission as its Secretariat, to coordinate monitoring and evaluation. It also intends to establish district-level Development Coordinating Committees to review child development programmes.

Effective monitoring assumes the existence of good data and the NPAs of the **Philippines** and **Viet Nam** propose further research on the problems affecting children.

The **Philippines** will accelerate the organization of Local Councils for the Welfare of Children to allow local communities to critically analyse their problems and mobilize resources to deal with them. These initiatives will strengthen the existing Child Monitoring System, which plays a major role in monitoring the fulfilment of WSC goals.

Viet Nam provides a research agenda to guide policy makers and programme managers in the development of effective NPA strategies. On the research agenda are indicators for child protection and care; children's basic needs and priorities in a developing market economy; expanded funding mechanisms for the social sector; and the changing role of the family in child protection.

Local-level implementation

In the **Republic of Korea**, two major NGOs — the Korea Children's Foundation and the Pusan Council on Social Welfare — organized seminars in 1991 to generate proposals for subnational programmes of action for local governments and NGOs.

Maldives develops the main elements of the partnership between the communities and government through the newly formed National Council for the Protection of the Rights of the Child. Because the country encompasses 2,000 coral atolls, 200 of them inhabited, the Ministry of Atolls Administration will steadily assume responsibility for achieving WSC goals, and action plans will be disaggregated by atoll and island into intersectoral annual plans.

Bhutan requires that engineers and medical, health supervisory, education and agricultural officers cooperate within the framework of a district development plan, with clear and accepted goals under the coordination of the district administrator. The community school board, teachers, village health workers and women will be assisted to form local groups to analyse problems and implement solutions.

Women in development

Most NPAs make women's development and the proper care of the girl child priorities. **India**, which promotes the goals for children within the broader framework of its eighth Five-Year Plan (1992-1997), urges programmes to "remove the gender bias and to improve the status of the girl child in society so as to provide her with equal opportunities for her survival and development to her full potential."

Bhutan targets women and girls as priority groups for health and education services and urges that efforts be made to "bring more women in the mainstream of development, rather than relying on traditional women's activities to improve their social welfare." The Government plans to hire more women as agriculture extension agents and village health workers.

The Rights of the Child

East Asian countries have convened two regional consultations on the Rights of the Child: The first was held before the World Summit for Children in 1990; and the second, in Beijing last year, involved 13 countries of East Asia and the Pacific, and produced 'The Beijing Consensus'. This document underscored the important links between the NPAs and the implementation of the Convention, and urged that a regional information network be established to assist in implementing the Convention and the WSC Plan of Action.

Asian NPAs also place special emphasis on children exploited in workplaces; those affected by economic and political changes and those suffering from crippling and disabling diseases or injuries. The countries put priority on reforming legislation, on educating the public to the rights and needs of children, and to providing special services for needy children.

In **Bangladesh,** the Forum on Children's Rights (*Shishu Adhikar Forum*), composed of agencies and individuals working with disadvantaged children, aims to formulate a legal framework for the protection of children's rights by 1993; to raise people's consciousness about children's rights by 60 per cent by 1995; and to increase the access by disadvantaged children to basic services by the year 2000.

China requires every province, autonomous region and municipality to formulate detailed rules for the implementation of the *National Law on the Protection of the Juvenile* by 1995.

Viet Nam, the first country in Asia and the second in the world to ratify the Convention on the Rights of the Child, promulgated two new laws in August 1991, the *Law on Child Protection, Care and Education of Children*, and the *Law on the Universalization of Primary Education*. These set out the basic rights and obligations of children and the responsibilities of families, the State and society towards them. The law on education makes primary education compulsory from first to fifth grade for all Vietnamese children between the ages of 6 and 14.

Sri Lanka proposes to legislate a Children's Act consolidating and updating all laws relating to children; it will also publicize the Children's Charter in the mass media and educate the public on the rights of the child.

Among the negative effects of the **Lao PDR**'s economic liberation has been the sale of children to work abroad, with many of them ending up in exploitative and inhumane conditions, including prostitution. To alert people to the dangers which their children face when they go abroad, the Government created foundations which have members who go from village to village talking about the problems.

Pakistan focuses on significantly reducing child labour in a country where 8-10 million children work. **Nepal** will also update its legislation covering child labour, which is decades old.

The **Philippines** proposes very specific goals and targets for CEDC; namely, to provide care for 50 per cent of neglected children; to help place 80 per cent of abandoned children who are free for adoption in adoptive homes; to ensure places for 70 per cent of abandoned children in care arrangements; to protect and rehabilitate 70 per cent of children reported to be abused and exploited; to reduce by 80 per cent the number of children in hazardous work or situations; to provide basic services for 80 per cent of children in situations of armed conflict; to ensure physical and psychological recovery and social integration for 80 per cent of CEDC.

China encourages understanding, respect, care and assistance for the disabled with its 'Young Pioneers Campaign to Help the Disabled'. **Viet Nam** provides special medical care and school support for 600,000 children, of whom 122,000 are children of dead war veterans, and 300,000 are orphans without relatives or children of critically wounded soldiers.

The **Republic of Korea** has set up 51 child guidance clinics with 380 professional counsellors in cities, provinces and factory areas to prevent the separation of children from their families; 5,400 counsellors work with children at the town and village levels. Nearly 300 protection centres care for more than 23,000 children who are separated from their families. To facilitate the search for missing children, there are 182 telephone lines set up in child-finding centres. The Government subsidizes the medical treatment and education of children who head a family because of the illness, death or other difficulties of their parents.

The **Democratic People's Republic of Korea** plans to construct new kindergartens so that by 1995 all eligible children will have access to pre-school education. To make more toys available for children's play, the Government also plans to enhance the production capacities of the Playthings Factory and the Educational Apparatus and Materials Factory.

Donald J. Casey is a development consultant.

Intermediate targets towards Summit goals in South Asia

At the second SAARC Conference on Children in South Asia in Colombo in September 1992, ministers and senior government officials from the region recommended the following intermediate targets towards the goals for the year 2000.

Education	ensuring access to, and enrolment in, primary school for at least 80 per cent of boys and 75 per cent of girls; ensuring that by 1995, 50 per cent of children entering primary school complete it.
Illiteracy	reducing adult and adolescent illiteracy from 1990 levels by 25 per cent by 1995.
Diarrhoeal diseases	establishing universal use of oral rehydration therapy for home-based treatment of diarrhoea and universal access to oral rehydration salts by 1996.
Iodine deficiencies	ensuring universal access to iodized salt by 1995.
Bias	progressively reducing gender disparity in all goal-related indicators.
Marriage	raising the minimum female age of marriage to at least 18 years.
Family planning	increasing contraception prevalence rate to 50 per cent by 1996 through the use of family planning services.
Child labour	speeding the elimination of child labour.
Water	providing access to safe drinking water for not less than three fourths of both rural and urban populations by 1996.
Health	eradicating dracunculiasis (guinea worm disease) by 1995; eliminating neonatal tetanus by 1995.

Countries' resources and NPAs

Country	Population (millions)	Per capita GNP (US$)	Annual allotments to NPAs	
			Average total (US$ millions)	Percentage of 1991 GNP
Bangladesh	116	200	261	1.1
Bhutan	2	190	12	5.0
China	1,171	370	n/c	n/a
Dem. Peoples' Rep. of Korea	22	970	n/c	n/a
India	863	350	n/c	n/a
Indonesia	188	570	1,378	1.2
Lao PDR	4	200	26	2.5
Malaysia	18	2,340	1,919	4.2
Maldives	0.2	—	34	3.4
Mongolia	2	780	17	n/a
Myanmar	43	220	86	0.4 *
Nepal	20	170	143	4.3
Pakistan	122	380	324	0.7
Philippines	64	730	n/c	n/a
Rep. of Korea	44	5,400	3,730	1.3
Sri Lanka	17	470	131	1.4
Thailand	55	1,420	n/c	n/a
Viet Nam	68	240	33	n/a

n/c: no costing of NPA.
n/a: not applicable.

* Per cent of 1989 GNP.

Percentages of projected annual NPA expenditures by sector in selected countries

Country	Education	Health/Nutrition	Water/Sanitation	Other (only major items)
Bangladesh	74	16	10	—
Bhutan	43	26	34	—
Lao PDR	42	54	—	4
Malaysia	33	24	39	4 — social development
Maldives	88	6	6	—
Mongolia	21	58	12	6 — CEDC; 3 — women
Myanmar	27	16	50	—
Nepal	38	12	36	15
Pakistan	52	35	13	—
Republic of Korea	15	44	6	24 — CEDC; 12 — women
Sri Lanka	66	4	29	2 — CEDC
Viet Nam	15	51	36	—

Polio challenge

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quick response to outbreaks.

Countries today spend about US$1 billion on costs associated with the expanded programme on immunization (EPI). An additional US$1 billion will be needed over the next decade to eradicate polio.

Mass campaigns, mopping up

More than routine vaccination is needed to eradicate polio. Mass campaigns and mopping up are keys to a future free of the disease.

"In 1990, we saw 84 per cent of infants fully immunized with polio vaccine. This decreases the disease, but enough children are not immunized so that it never goes away. We need mass campaigns to knock it out," says Ward.

In mass campaigns, including national immunization days, every child under the age of five receives the vaccine, thus shrinking the pool of children who could potentially contract the disease.

Mopping-up activities involve going from house to house to immunize people who live in identified high-risk or underserved areas, and responding in the same way to any outbreak of the disease.

These strategies are crucial to eradication because poliovirus exists wild in some countries or can be imported and cause outbreaks of the disease, even when immunization coverage levels are high.

In 1978, 100 cases of Type 1 polio — the type that most commonly causes paralysis — occurred in the Netherlands among members of a religious group which refuses immunization. The disease spread to members of the same group in Canada and the United States. And in 1992, a less virulent Type 3 virus imported from South India caused another 68 cases of polio in the Netherlands group.

Sharpening surveillance

The number of reported polio cases fell by 60 per cent from 1988, to just under 13,000 cases in 1991. Still, WHO says that fewer than 15 per cent of cases are officially reported. Improved surveillance, therefore, is critical. Laboratories are an essential component of the surveillance network.

"With smallpox, you knew it had gone when you stopped seeing people with rash and fever. With polio, you can get exactly the same symptoms from other viruses, so you must have laboratories to test for poliovirus," Ward explains.

WHO is developing a network of laboratories to work on the different facets of detecting transmission, training and quality control. In each region, five specialized and sophisticated labs will support the work of two to four regional reference labs. The regional labs, in turn, will coordinate the work of five to ten national labs.

Laboratory tests will differentiate between the wild poliovirus and the virus associated with the vaccine. "We're giving out vaccine virus by the bucketful, so it's very important to know whether a virus is wild, so that we can sound the alarm bells and go after it," says Ward.

The wild virus must be pursued everywhere: where polio is still endemic; where immunization coverage is low and where transmission tends to persist. Urban slums, areas of poor hygiene or areas where environmental monitoring has detected wild poliovirus in sewage or waste waters, are all critical targets.

"Even when no disease is reported, surveillance must remain high," says Ward.

Concentrate, then expand

Although polio is endemic in Bangladesh, India and Pakistan, other places have none at all. The most striking progress towards polio eradication has been in the Americas, where mass campaigns have apparently wiped out the virus. No cases of polio have been reported in the region since August 1991.

Other places where the wild poliovirus has most probably been eradicated are Australia, Japan and countries in the Pacific Basin. Most of Western Europe is free of polio, with the exception of the Netherlands. Encouraging results are also coming from Algeria, Morocco and Tunisia, thanks to mass campaigns.

To make the most of limited resources, WHO has targeted priority areas. One such area is made up of Europe and the new Republics of the former Soviet Union, Ward says. Another is the Middle East, where Jordan may already be free of polio and Syria will soon follow. From the polio-free countries of southern Africa, attention will be extended to Kenya and Zambia. The Western Pacific and East Asian countries are highly committed to polio eradication.

Once an area is reliably free of polio, the eradication strategies will be extended outward to areas where the disease persists. Research may help speed this process in the near future.

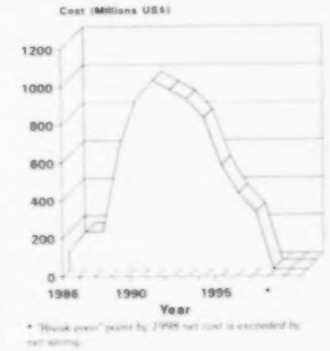
A thermostable vaccine is anticipated within two years. A vaccine that retains potency for a week in warm temperatures would cut costs associated with the cold chain — the refrigeration methods now essential in transporting vaccines affected by heat — and make it much easier to reach remote areas. And better diagnostic laboratory tests might generate accurate results in two days instead of a month.

While the picture is promising, Ward warns that eradication is still a tremendous challenge.

"If we don't succeed by the year 2000, there were really two things missing. The first is political commitment. The second is enough vaccine to mount mass campaigns. Only with these can we hope to get rid of every last wild poliovirus."

Susan Guthridge is an information consultant with UNICEF in Geneva.

Save lives, save money



If present progress in polio eradication is maintained, the global initiative will start to pay for itself by the year 1998 and produce savings of US$500 million annually by the year 2000, increasing to US$3 billion per year by 2015.

World Health Organization

Salt producers

continued from page 3

where iodine deficiency is prevalent are at great risk.

For example, while the exact correlation of the numbers may lead to discussion, one can postulate that of the 30 to 50 per cent of all newborns in China who have thyroid disorders caused by iodine deficiencies in their mothers, most will suffer irreversible intellectual disability as a result.

Studies by G. Maberly and others show that in areas with an incidence of mild to moderate IDD, IQs of school children are, on average, 10 points below those of children living in areas where there is no iodine deficiency. If half of all children born each year in China are iodine deficient, the resulting loss could add up to some 60 million IQ points each year.

Mrs. Gao, an official of China's Ministry of Health, said recently in reference to the consequences of iodine deficiencies, "Ignorance is not bliss."

The world has no reason for not attacking IDD, which is probably the easiest of all malnutrition problems to correct. It can be done and it should be done. Our generation is the one that must do it. Further delay is unacceptable by any standard.

David P. Haxton is a former Regional Director of UNICEF and a Board Member of ICCIDD. He has worked on IDD elimination programmes in Asia, Africa, Central and South America.

MEETINGS, REPORTS SUPPORT GOVERNMENT/PRODUCER ALLIANCE

At the seventh World Salt Symposium in Kyoto (Japan) in April 1992, the International Council for the Control of Iodine Deficiency Disorders (ICCIDD) proposed a creative alliance with salt producers.

Similarly, ICCIDD and the Government of Botswana, with support from UNICEF, the International Life Sciences Institute, the Canadian International Development Agency (CIDA) and the World Health Organization (WHO) held a workshop in April 1992. There, officials from government and private industry as well as communications specialists from seven southern African countries discussed the complementary roles of governments and private producers in eliminating IDD.

Discussions at the meeting revealed that governments need to formulate iodization levels and create ways to verify those levels in fortified salt. (In Bolivia, for example, the police spot check iodine levels as salt leaves the salt-producing area.) Industry, for its part, needs to produce a quality product with adequate iodization levels at acceptable prices.

A report by ICCIDD, UNICEF and WHO was issued in April 1992, clearly showing the seriousness of IDD in Europe and calling for mutually supportive actions by industry, science and governments to address the issue.

A meeting in Dakar in September 1992 of producers and government officials from West African nations agreed on steps to accelerate iodization of salt, including salt produced abroad, by the private sector.

The Programme Against Micronutrient Malnutrition of Emory University in Atlanta, Georgia (US) held a meeting in November 1992. It brought together the Carter Center, the United States Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, ICCIDD, the International Vitamin A Consultative Group, the Iron Nutritional Anaemia Group, UNICEF, WHO, the United States Agency for International Development (USAID), the International Development Research Centre and the International Centre of Food Science Nutrition in the Netherlands, with representatives of multinational industry leaders from Canada, Europe and North America.

Bangladesh

continued from page 3

the Mollah Salt Industries on the outskirts of Dhaka, admits that until he heard of the salt iodization scheme, he was unaware of the link between goitre and iodine deficiency. His factory processes 50 tons of salt a day, only half of which is now iodized. When asked why he wasn't iodizing all the salt, he replied, "Iodized salt is more expensive, but when everybody produces it, the price will drop."

Mr. Mannan sells a ton of plain salt for 5,500 taka (about US$140), while a ton of iodized salt sells for 7,250 taka (about US$180). The difference, he says, covers the cost of the 25 workers who run the iodization machine and pack the salt into regulation one-kilo plastic bags that help retain the iodine. On the market the bags sell for about 9 taka (22 cents). Untreated salt is sold loose, enabling people of little means to buy very small quantities.

Iodized salt is not yet readily available. Shyamol's father travels three kilometres to a neighbouring village to buy it. Ignorance is another obstacle. A survey in 1992 conducted by the Government and UNICEF found that very few people know that goitre and birth defects such as cretinism are linked.

Goitre is a subject of social ridicule. For young girls with it, marriage is difficult without paying a heavy dowry. It is variously believed to be infectious, hereditary or caused by certain kinds of food, improper sexual mores or bad sleeping positions. Many misconceptions are shared by village doctors and even trained health workers.

Equally misguided beliefs are held about treatments. Iodized oil injections are thought to cure goitre, rather than protect women's unborn children. Some village doctors inject tincture of iodine directly into the goitre, or even worse, they scratch the goitre and apply iodine to the open wound. Patients have also been told to drink iodine antiseptic.

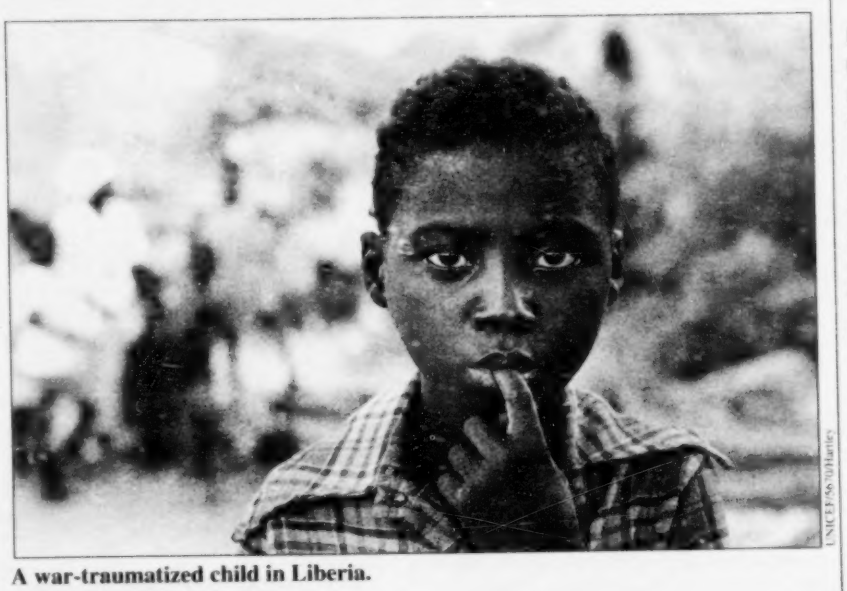
A communications strategy being created by the Government and UNICEF will raise knowledge levels and help create a demand for iodized salt. The challenge will be to increase production to meet that demand, while at the same time reducing the price so that everyone can afford iodized salt.

Maggie Murray-Lee, Global Communications Officer, Division of Information, UNICEF New York, visited Bangladesh recently.

Peace performance draws crowds in Liberia

By Julia Spry Leverton

"We don't want no more war," chanted the chorus of child actors in Liberia, in a performance to help change the minds and heal the hearts of audiences around their country and region.



UNICEF/Sk'Tiharies

A war-traumatized child in Liberia.

Dressed in baggy shirts with broad red, white and blue stripes, a troupe of child actors are confronting and helping heal some of the terrible divisions in Liberian society.

The troupe's director is Joe Gbaba, who hosted his own entertainment programme on Liberian television before the civil war. Now Gbaba helps educate rather than entertain, working to reconcile differences with a unique peace message from the country's children.

The brutal violence of the civil war in 1990 touched everyone in the country. Gbaba became aware of its deep effect on children when he began working with those who had been orphaned or abandoned. In the weekly drama programme he devised, he encouraged them to improvise, mime, act out folk stories and dance, to get them to laugh and respond like children again.

He quickly came to realize that the horrors the children had witnessed — or shared, because children were recruited as soldiers by every faction — had impaired their sense of personal, social and national identity. The children needed to redevelop a sense of national identity and patriotism. Gbaba said, "They needed to be shown that there's something worth their allegiance that transcends the tribal loyalties that were the root of all the trouble." He taught them to salute the red, white and blue Liberian flag and sing the national anthem by heart.

Shaping theory into practice

The best therapy, Gbaba felt, would combine expressions of national pride with the songs, games and myths from a child's own ethnic culture. The children would 'act' these out in a theatre troupe. His idea was honed in a workshop run by UNICEF, where educators met to discuss initiatives in healing and reconciliation that could be incorporated into the school curriculum. This was a priority as term-time neared, particularly in Monrovia, where children from families still experiencing bitter tribal enmity would share classrooms.

Leading the workshop was Barry Hart, an American working with the Christian Health Association of Liberia, a non-governmental organization (NGO) that had focused on ways to disseminate peace messages when the conflict ended.

In discussions, Gbaba's idea for a youth theatre troupe was endorsed by Hart, an experienced counsellor who had worked with traumatized children in situations such as the West Bank and the Gaza Strip. Calling it a potential "bridge-builder," he said the youth theatre could help lift both adults and children over the hostilities of the past.

In order to recruit a cast, Gbaba began touring neighbourhoods, asking the most animated youngsters to show off their dance steps or improvise a line or two of song. Eventually a cast of 30 children from 8 to 15 years of age was selected, with a scrupulous balance of boys and girls and, even more important, representative of all of Liberia's tribal groupings.

The children, nervous at first, responded quickly to discussion sessions with Gbaba as they worked on a story line and scripted songs, rapidly understanding the messages of reconstruction and reunification they learned. Their choice of a name for their troupe was telling: '*Kukatonon*', a word meaning 'we are one'

The play is the thing

The premiere, held fittingly on the Day of the African Child (16 June) at the Executive Pavilion in Monrovia, drew a high-level audience of government officials, NGO representatives, educators and UNICEF personnel. The play confronted the violence and confusion of the civil war by dramatizing a folk-tale about a family of chickens experiencing conflict. As the differences of opinion persisted, the children admonished the audience: "If you don't listen to each other, there can never be peace."

At the play's end, a compromise is reached and family members are reunited. The children's final triumphant chorus, featuring the refrain "We don't want no more war," rang out as the audience, some dabbing at a tear, left the hall.

Tangible effects

Up until *Kukatonon*, peace education in Liberia was invaluable but largely invisible; UNICEF specialists had planned an innovative course in trauma counselling for educators, civil servants, health workers and others in public life. With *Kukatonon*, peace educators had a tangible tool that they could use to spearhead their efforts.

The troupe was appreciated more widely than expected. Just before its first performance, it was invited to perform in Gbarnga, the capital of the rebel government in divided Liberia. And a request came in for help in organizing a peace education workshop in the eastern province of neighbouring Sierra Leone. Conflict resolution remains an urgent need there, where nearly a quarter of a million displaced people struggle to adjust to the after-effects of Liberia's civil war.

Julia Spry-Leverton is a development writer, who frequently writes for UNICEF.

Bhutan's new health workers: Buddhist monks

By Emma S.J. Pradhan

In villages and communities throughout the Himalayan Kingdom of Bhutan, a network of new allies is working to improve the nation's health.

The country's Buddhist monks are spreading health and development information in the rural areas of the country — where 90 per cent of the people live — thanks to this innovative effort made by the Government through the Department of Health Services.

The number of monks, their closeness to the people and the fact that they live even in the most remote areas of the country all make them especially suited to carry information to the people. To ensure that the monks are completely effective in their role as communicators (and perhaps ultimately even as potential volunteer village health workers), the Government is helping them develop their capacities in this field.

As the monks pointed out, however, they could communicate well about health and sanitation matters only if they themselves had improved access to health and water and sanitation facilities. So to ensure that the monks knew exactly what they were talking about, the Government included monasteries when it drew up plans for improved access to water and sanitation.

Regular medical check-ups are also available for monks, especially in monasteries situated far from health facilities. And the young students in monastic schools — to which most Bhutanese families send at least one of their sons, often when the boys are only six or seven years old — are immunized.

Merging the modern and traditional

The goal of the partnership between the monks and the health system is to encourage people, who still rely heavily on traditional and spiritual healers when they are ill, to use the country's free health services. It is hoped that people will thus see that the spiritual can be combined with modern medical treatment in a positive way.

The cooperation covers several areas. Monks, for instance, encourage mothers to complete the full round of their children's immunizations, a challenging prospect that can involve five trips to a health centre across often rugged terrain.

A series of workshops has also been held to explore further ways of mobilizing monks for health promotion and to train them in the prevention and treatment of common diseases, including the control of dehydration from diarrhoea.

Monks coach people on how to prepare and use oral rehydration salts (ORS) for diarrhoea, using the ORS packets that the Government has made available to all monastic centres.

Recently, UNICEF also sponsored a workshop in communication through drama for health care trainers. Participants included monks, *gomchens* — lay religious people who live in the community — and health personnel.

The skills taught included dramatic improvisation and animated storytelling, which participants will put to use in training others, as well as in staging health-drama performances during festivals and other occasions.

Emma S.J. Pradhan is a freelance writer living in Thimphu, Bhutan.

HEALTH NOTES

Ban sought on anti-diarrhoeals for children

A US consumer advocacy organization, Public Citizen, has called on the US Food and Drug Administration (FDA) to ban or relabel five of the most common prescription and over-the-counter drugs used to treat diarrhoea in children, citing their ineffectiveness and potential for causing actual harm to children. Among the drugs are loperamide hydrochloride, diphenoxylate hydrochloride with atropine sulfate, and drugs containing kaolin, pectin, activated charcoal and attapulgite.

Anti-diarrhoeals are not only expensive for families in the developing world, they can often mask the dangerous dehydration that diarrhoea causes.

Oral rehydration therapy is the best and most economical way to manage diarrhoeal diseases, except when antibiotics or antiparasitics are needed.

If the FDA acts on the basis of the petition to change the registration or licensing of some or all of the anti-diarrhoeals cited, then they could no longer be exported to developing countries.

Essential drugs, vaccines and medical supplies reach remote areas in Cambodia

A major UNICEF-assisted project to ensure medical supplies throughout Cambodia received a major boost late last year when the United Nations Transitional Authority in Cambodia (UNTAC) began flying the supplies by helicopter to points throughout the country. Such items as essential drugs, oral rehydration salts and obstetrical sets are delivered every four months, conditions permitting, to all functioning provincial and district hospitals and commune health facilities in the effort.

NEWS BRIEFS

CLEAN UP THE WORLD: Recognizing that one way to heighten environmental awareness is for community members to tidy up their own parks, public land, beaches and roads, an Australian non-profit organization called Clean Up the World, the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) and the American Egbar Foundation are promoting a world clean-up weekend from 17 to 19 September. Clean Up the World is an extension of the successful annual Clean Up Australia Day, started in 1989. For the world event, it is hoped that towns and communities in over 100 countries will hold locally sponsored and organized clean-ups. For more information, including details on 'How To Do It', contact Clean Up the World, 123 Harris Street, Pyrmont, Sydney, SNW 2009, Australia. Tel.: 612-692-0700; fax: 612-692-0761.

PACKAGING CHILD RIGHTS MESSAGES: Drawings and text illustrating and reinforcing messages from the Convention on the Rights of the Child, including children's rights to shelter, food, safe water, education and protection in times of war, will go out on the 60 million milk packets distributed in Sweden each month by the local milk company Arla. This is one of several awareness and fund-raising campaigns launched by the Swedish Committee for UNICEF earlier this year.

MAKING RADIO A TWO-WAY EXCHANGE: A short-wave radio programme based in Costa Rica is opening up the air waves for women worldwide to tell their own stories, express their opinions and learn from each other. The Feminist International Radio Endeavour broadcasts tapes received from women, combining several tapes to create a programme. A programme tape is also sent to participating women, who play them in their community groups to spark discussion.

CHILDREN'S ART, CHILDREN'S RIGHTS: Syrian children put pens, pastels and crayons to beautiful use last year in a drawing contest sponsored by UNICEF and the Pioneers Organization. The paintings and drawings on child rights grace a calendar with *Facts for Life* messages and a booklet on the activities of the Pioneer Organization in Syria. This youth organization has a membership of approximately 2.5 million children (between ages 7 and 12) and 20,000 teachers. The booklet about the Pioneers also contains the Convention on the Rights of the Child in Arabic.

BOOKS

The Case for Investing in Basic Education, by Martin Carnoy, UNICEF, New York, 1992.

This compact report surveys 30 years of research evidence which supports the concept that quality basic education carries a major pay-off for the well-being of nations as well as individuals.

The strongest arguments, Mr. Carnoy notes, have always been economic: Quite simply, populations that have been educated have proved to be better at agriculture and industrial production. But "literacy and numeracy represent more than just the ability to read, write and perform calculations. Imbedded in these skills is a culture of 'learnability' that capacitates individuals and nations to use new knowledge in solving development problems."

The survey ranges around the world to show what developing countries are achieving in basic education and documents the practical issues they face, such as costs, the education of girls, the status and motivation of teachers, and the pitfalls of schooling systems imported wholesale from the industrialized world.

By and large, says the author, existing systems for basic education tend to act as a filter, favouring the already privileged. But evidence also shows that, with the expenditure of more creativity and not much more money, the goal of a 'learning society' is both achievable and well worth the investment.

Education for All: What are we waiting for? by Mary B. Anderson, UNICEF, New York, 1992.

Worldwide, 130 million children are going without primary education, and many children in school are failing to learn. Estimates are that by century's end more than 1 billion of the world's population will be illiterate.

The author of this readable report contends that "Two main obstacles keep education systems from reaching all children and from teaching children effectively – a lack of resources and a lack of ideas." These factors are interconnected, according to Ms. Anderson, and both can be overcome.

Part I of the report summarizes the issues in terms of nine 'building blocks' for education. At the heart of the endeavour lie the child, a motivated teacher, and workable choices of time and place for schooling. The supporting 'blocks' are supplied by parent and community involvement, lively teaching of an appropriate curriculum and systems for administering and funding education.

Part II analyses six innovative programmes which have improved the quality or outreach of education by taking a fresh approach. They are the non-formal primary education programme of the Bangladesh Rural Advancement Committee (BRAC); Colombia's '*escuela nueva*' programme; interactive radio instruction in Kenya and the Dominican Republic; Zimbabwe's accelerated programme for teacher education; and the UNICEF magazine *Sawa*, which serves children in war-torn Lebanon.

Collectors' item: Help wanted

Ronald de Vries, a Dutch national, began collecting UNICEF greeting cards and brochures in 1984, and since then he has assembled a nearly complete collection of all the cards and brochures ever printed by UNICEF. However, a few pieces are still missing and Mr. de Vries is keen to get in touch with anyone who can help him complete his collection.

People interested in exchanging UNICEF brochures and cards with Ronald de Vries are asked to contact him at Diestel 39, 5527 KB HAPERT, Netherlands. Tel: (31) 4977-86108.

Central Asian States face health challenges

Diphtheria is spreading in what the World Health Organization (WHO) calls epidemic proportions in Russia, with 4,000 people having contracted the disease in 1992, according to a news report. The number of new cases is rising at more than 500 a month. In comparison, in the last big outbreak of diphtheria in Europe during the 1970s, the number of new cases never surpassed 20.

Experts attribute the resurgence of the disease to problems in the Russian immunization programme. In Russia, doctors do not immunize many infants out of fear of compounding other health problems, and few adults receive vaccination boosters. Political and economic instability has further disrupted immunizations: Only 47 per cent of infants in Russia were immunized against diphtheria in 1991, down from 80 per cent in the previous decade.

In a related development, the United States Agency for International Development (USAID) released figures early this year showing that 500,000 children in four Republics of the former Soviet Union had been immunized against the six vaccine-preventable diseases (including diphtheria) through its Emergency Immunization Support Program in 1992.

The needs in four Republics — Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan and Uzbekistan — were assessed by a team from USAID's Resources for Child Health (REACH) project early in 1992. The team found that vaccine shortages were acute, and that power outages and a lack of cold-chain equipment and immunization supplies were widespread.

Russian vaccine suppliers can provide only a fraction of the vaccines needed, as little as 25 or 30 per cent in some cases, according to Robert Steinglass of REACH, who stressed that vaccine donations will be needed in 1993 to protect the children in the region of the four Republics.

EVENTS AND MEETINGS

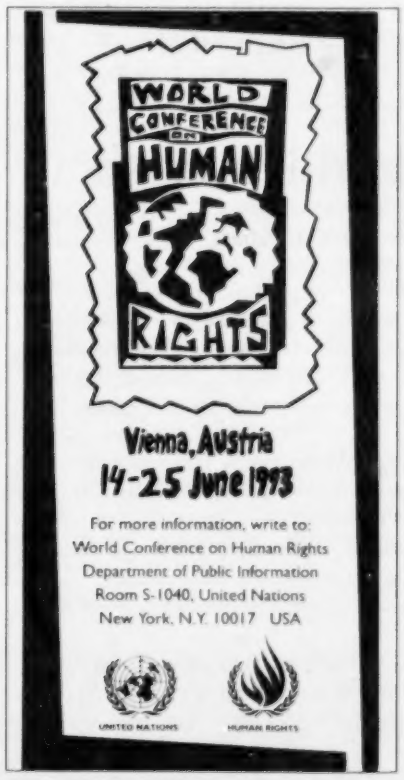
April: 7, World Health Day: 'Handle life with care: Prevent violence and negligence' (Contact: WHO); **22-24**, 1993 Paediatric AIDS Conference, in Vancouver, Canada (Contact: Continuing Education in Health Sciences, Vancouver, tel: (604) 822-2626).

May: 3-14, World Health Assembly, in Geneva (Contact: WHO); **7-8**, Safe Motherhood Pre-Congress Workshop, in Vancouver (Contact: Int. Congress of Midwives/WHO); **9-14**, Midwives hear the heartbeat of the future, in Vancouver (Contact: Int. Congress of Midwives); **21-27**, 1993 Rotary International Convention, Melbourne (Contact: Rotary International); **31**, World No-Tobacco Day: 'Health services: Our window to a tobacco-free world' (Contact: WHO).

June: 5, World Environment Day (Contact: United Nations); **14-25**, World Conference on Human Rights, in Vienna (Contact: Centre for Human Rights); **16**, Day of the African Child (Contact: UNICEF, New York); **20-23**, 20th Annual International Health Conference: Health and the Environment: Meeting the Challenge for Human Development, in Arlington, VA, USA (Contact: National Council on International Health).

July: 4-9, First World Congress on Family Law and Children's Rights in Sydney (Contact: Conference Secretariat, tel. 612 2564467); **5-6**, 2nd International Colloquium of Mayors, in Mexico City (Contact: Mexico City Mayor's Office); **11**, World Population Day (Contact: United Nations Population Fund); **25-27**, 'Breastfeeding: A Global Priority' Seminar for Physicians, Hilton Head, SC, USA (Contact: American Academy of Paediatrics/La Leche League International).

Please let ***First Call for Children*** know about your events and meetings by sending notices four months prior to the event to Yvonne Lester, ***First Call for Children***, 3 UN Plaza, New York, NY 10017 or fax: (212) 326-7768.



HEALTH NOTES

SIDS and smoking

The kidneys of a number of babies who died as a result of sudden infant death syndrome (SIDS) were found on autopsy to be significantly underdeveloped, an indication that the infants had missed key intrauterine stages of development, leaving them vulnerable to SIDS, according to results of a recent ground-breaking study in the UK. Further tests are needed to determine if organs other than the kidneys are also impaired.

The most significant cause of intrauterine growth retardation is smoking; studies in a number of countries have already found infants of mothers who smoked during pregnancy to be at greater risk of SIDS. Smoking by fathers is similarly associated with increased SIDS risk.

Somalia: Facing the future, from dependence to self-sufficiency

An OXFAM/UNICEF project in Somalia offers agricultural support to farmers like this woman. Seeds from this crop go to other farmers, helping to reduce aid dependency.

By Sara Ann Friedman

While the world watches the massive humanitarian effort and on-camera military intervention of the US Marines and other troops in Somalia, non-governmental organizations (NGOs), in partnership with Somali relief workers, community organizers and clan elders, are doing the tedious, unglamourous and essential work of rebuilding the country from the bottom up. Agriculture, health and nutrition, education and virtually every sphere of life have been shattered by the devastation of the last two years.

Thirty-one international organizations, including the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC), CARE, Save the Children Federation (SCF), Concern, Doctors Without Borders, OXFAM UK, their Somali staffs and a dozen local NGOs, have helped deliver health services and technical assistance over the past two years. But, says CARE communications officer, John Mohrbacher, as media attention has finally focused on this monumental relief effort and NGOs are finally getting the recognition they deserve, the international staff members are "wearing the halos" which belong on the heads of the Somali people. The real heroes are the Somali relief workers who drove trucks, immunized children and distributed medicines in the worst of danger. "If the media hang around long enough," he suggests, "maybe they'll get to the real story."

The western media portrays Somalis as helpless victims or lawless bandits, says Hibaaq Osman, Chair of the Center for the Advancement of Somali Women and Children. "For the hundredth time they show starving children with bloated bellies, and gun-toting, swaggering 14-year-olds. The message is: 'Somalia is totally helpless and chaotic. There is no hope.'"

The capital is dangerous, she says. But other parts of the country are more stable, especially the northern region of Somaliland. If ships are diverted from Mogadishu, there are other open ports. Those "swaggering, gun-toting 14-year-olds," she adds, "saw their parents killed, their sisters raped. They had no hope, nothing except guns." If educational programmes were in place, there would be no need for guns.

There are teachers and nurses working without pay, and many indigenous organizations all over Somalia, she says. "The international community should be there supporting those groups and parts of the country where there is stability. They would have immediate impact and avoid another Mogadishu."

So another part of the 'real story', according to Osman and others, is the importance of immediate long-term development assistance to enable Somalis to become self-sufficient, and escape the 'aid-dependency' trap that has held many African nations captive since the late 1960s.

While most agree that the massive relief assistance has helped to reduce the death rate, many NGOs feel that this effort must be viewed as short-term. Food aid can upset all kinds of balances, precarious as they were in Somalia. Planting corn becomes unprofitable because of all the rice in the kitchens and other dry food distribution by the humanitarian agencies. In one girls' orphanage, supported by the US-based American Friends Service Committee (AFSC), an income-generating bread baking project failed because there was no market for the bread. "Food relief is always a double-edged sword," says Philip Johnston, President of CARE and coordinator of the current relief operation. "In the short-term it saves lives; in the long-term it can encourage dependency."

Many NGOs, in fact, view the genesis of Somalia's current crisis in the last quarter century of just such dependency. During that time, Soviet-US competition vied for Somalia's loyalty and for its strategic resources with heavy infusions of foreign 'aid' that served mostly to consolidate power in Mogadishu and often did not reach the people who most needed it. The end of the cold war left Somalia, like many other nations of Africa, high and dry, armed to the hilt but without a viable domestic economy. Official development programmes of the 1980s, exacerbated by the civil war, set in motion large-scale migration to the cities and increasing disparity between rural and urban areas.

Moreover, the International Monetary Fund (IMF) stipulated that stored grain be sold for export, and that food crops be converted to cash crops as part of structural adjustment policies instituted in Somalia and other African nations in the 1980s. At the November 1992 International Conferenc on Assistance to African Children in Dakar, Sidi Tidiane Gueye, President of the Federation of African Workers, speaking on behalf of many of the NGOs attending the Conference, blamed the "external orientation" of many African economies for the depth of their problems and underscored the need to shift to a "real policy of food self-sufficiency."

"If we expect to leave Somalia any better off than it was before our intervention," says Lee Castinelli, Associate Professor of African History at the University of Pennsylvania, in the US, "we must think in new ways about positive changes that will take root in a country deeply scarred and highly suspicious of foreigners' motives."

As the crisis subsides, giant NGOs like CARE, with relief budgets for Somalia of US$20 million currently, and small agencies with annual budgets

Continued on page 14

Hidden crisis in Somalia: Vitamin A deficiency

By John M. Palmer

In the current emergency situation in Somalia, worrying about a deficiency in vitamin A may at first seem frivolous. But the effects are profound, despite their seeming invisibility. Children eating enough to satisfy minimum caloric requirements but who are vitamin A-deficient are at risk of contracting a serious condition called xerophthalmia, which causes night blindness, ulceration of the cornea, and, ultimately, total and irreversible blindness. And long before these symptoms appear, severe complications from measles and infectious diseases can lead to numerous deaths.

Since many health care and relief personnel working in Somalia are not trained to identify the symptoms or suspect a deficiency of vitamin A, the health of thousands of Somalis being saved by food distribution efforts will continue to deteriorate from what nutritionists call 'hidden hunger'. We must ensure that our efforts to feed the children in Somalia will also nourish them so that when the emergency is over, their growth and development are guaranteed.

A 1988 report published by the International Vitamin A Consultative Group (IVACG) recommends that "the prevention and control of vitamin A deficiency should always be an integral part of relief operations during famine." Fortification of relief foods with vitamin A or the distribution of megadose capsules of vitamin A provides a key nutrient missing in inadequate diets. As the crisis subsides, promoting breastfeeding and finding local, vitamin A-rich dietary sources should resume top priority.

Helen Keller International (HKI) recommends a four-pronged approach that our agency has applied in countries such as Ethiopia, the Sudan, and Zambia:

- *Advocacy*, which includes educating decision makers, international authorities, local organizations and health care workers about the need for vitamin A in the diet, and promoting the fortification of relief foods.
- *Direct technical assistance*, which means assisting governments and non-governmental organizations working in Somalia to distribute appropriate doses of vitamin A capsules as quickly as possible to prevent mortality and blindness associated with the endemic vitamin A deficiency that accompanies famine.
- *Materials' development*, which involves creating or modifying training materials for health workers that will ensure the correct use of vitamin A supplements, avoiding the possibility of dangerous complications resulting from inadvertent overdoses. It also includes producing posters, brochures and pamphlets highlighting vitamin A-rich local foods, such as yellow and orange fruits and vegetables, and leafy green vegetables.
- *Sharing of information*, which involves dissemination of materials and information among people at all levels, from policy makers to health workers to community organizations to families.

Even as the number of deaths from starvation in Somalia is decreasing, 'hidden hunger' remains a problem both now and in the future. If we can look beyond the 'quick fix' with intelligent, diligent and cooperative action, there is a good chance that a sustainable, Somali-based initiative to meet the country's own nutritional needs will not only begin, but flourish.

For a copy of the IVACG report, published in September 1988, entitled *Guidelines for the Use of Vitamin A in Emergency and Relief Operations*, contact the IVACG Secretariat. *(See 'Publications' on page 15 for address.)*

John M. Palmer is the Executive Director of Helen Keller International.

DAKAR CONFERENCE

NGOs gain new role in OAU

To ensure a secure future for African children, a major conference held in November in Dakar (Senegal) promised to take concrete and far-reaching actions by the year 2000. Adopting the Dakar Consensus that pledged to make women and children the centre of African development strategies, the International Conference on Assistance to African Children (ICAAC), held on 25-27 November 1992, was a follow-up to the World Summit for Children and a bold new step, "the most important event for children since the World Summit for Children," according to James P. Grant, Executive Director of UNICEF.

ICAAC was also an historic event for non-governmental organizations (NGOs). The beginnings of a new partnership were forged between the Organization of African Unity (OAU) and NGOs with plans for a new NGO Committee on the OAU, similar in structure to the NGO Committee on UNICEF. There can only be benefits from this new relationship, says Florence Manguyu, President-elect of the Medical Women's International Association and Acting Chair of the African NGO Coordination Committee at ICAAC. "Joined in one cause, the new NGO Committee and the OAU will only strengthen and energize each other. NGOs reach where governments can't."

The new Committee will be a logical outgrowth and formalization of an evolving relationship between NGOs and African governments. Previously, says Manguyu, NGOs were often seen as the opposition party. As new African democracies eliminate one-party systems, they are more ready to listen to other points of view and NGO voices have been increasingly heard.

For several years NGOs have been working closely, if quietly, with various governments helping to draft the African Charter on the Rights and Welfare of the Child and programmes of action for the World Summit for Children.

In Kenya, several NGOs collaborated with the Government in helping to incorporate the World Summit Programmes of Action in domestic programmes and to codify the Convention on the Rights of the Child into domestic law. The 70 international and African NGOs attending ICAAC enjoyed full participation in the Conference.

Through their national programmes of action (NPAs), African governments committed themselves to specific, low-cost goals for 1995 and broader goals for the year 2000. These include doable health actions, such as reducing even further measles, vitamin A and iodine deficiency, and dehydration caused by diarrhoea; doubling the financial assistance for social sector issues such as basic education, primary health care, nutrition programmes, responsible parenthood and family planning, and low-cost water and sanitation systems; and addressing the problems of children with special needs — refugees, AIDS victims and their children, children suffering abuse and neglect, and children in armed conflict.

African nations also committed themselves to an unprecedented shift in resources from the military to "priority actions that would meet the needs of children and women." If the promises are kept, the lives of more than 1 million children each year would be saved.

War spurs women's education in Lebanon

The effect of Lebanon's 16-year war on the university education of its young women has been far less crippling than expected, according to a recent study. Instead, the economic crisis created by the war seems to have served as a catalyst for higher education of Lebanese women and spurred a growing trend.

The field survey, which interviewed women in branches of five different universities, was sponsored by the Lebanese Family Planning Association and conducted by Dr. Aisha Harb Zareik, Professor of Education at the Lebanese University, in an attempt to explore the impact of the war on postwar society.

For many reasons, the evidence appears clear that higher education is important to both Lebanese women and their families. Of women surveyed, 11 per cent were from low-income families and either attended a free university or worked for tuition. Despite the dangers of war, 66 per cent of the women interviewed said they chose their university because of its subject strength rather than because of safety or proximity to home.

According to Dr. Zareik, parents interviewed felt that a financially rewarding occupation could sustain a man and his family even in the absence of higher education, while they considered a university degree essential for daughters. It offers better career opportunities, qualifications for a 'better' husband, and acts as a tool that a woman could use to build a better future should her marriage fail or should she remain single.

Editor's note: Widespread international research has also shown the direct and tangible links between female education, the improved health and education of their children, and the economic and social health of their nation.

This improvements include lower birth rates, lower infant mortality rates, higher family incomes, greater social mobility and sustained socio-economic improvement.

UNICEF/5238/Toutounji

A Lebanese woman in a training session.

Reading award

The Grupo de Animación a la Lectura, a Spanish group working to stimulate children's enjoyment and pleasure in reading, has been chosen as the winner of the 1993 IBBY-Asahi Reading Promotion Award. Via teachers' workshops and a constantly evolving teacher's manual, the Spanish group from Madrid uses a variety of games and strategies to promote the joy of reading among children, with special attention to non-readers and poor readers.

The annual IBBY award, sponsored by the Japanese newspaper company Asahi Shimbun, is given to a group or institution which is judged to have made a significant and lasting contribution for developing book promotion programmes for children and young people. The 1993 award was presented to the Grupo de Animación a la Lectura at the Bologna Book Fair in April.

Somalia

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of under a quarter of a million dollars there, are all shifting from emergency to development and looking eagerly down the road toward those 'new ways'.

Resettlement of displaced families in their villages is the first order of business. In normal times, 90 per cent of Somalia's economy depends on agriculture and livestock. NGOs know the extent of the interlocking, concrete and often intangible tasks required to assist the development of a healthy economy and a healthy population: rehabilitating farms and livestock industry, distributing seeds and tools, rebuilding water supplies, repairing roads, rebuilding schools and hospitals, and training village health workers. CARE has already begun to sell food to local merchants to help revitalize commercial markets. The money from those sales will go to Somali organizations for rehabilitation programmes.

To make the transition, the Irish NGO Concern has linked its feeding centres with educational facilities for the children who come to them. Save the Children UK has attached 13 locally run health clinics to its feeding centres, and is working closely with the Ministry of Health in Mogadishu, the only Ministry in the south that was still functioning. As the number of children admitted to the feeding centres decreased from 20,000 in August to 6,000 in December, many centres have closed. But the clinics have stayed open, providing a variety of treatments for mothers and children, including immunization and prenatal care.

NGOs also underscore the importance of supporting local initiatives, of working with Somali NGOs, local structures and communities as partners. Renewal of Somalia can best be promoted from the ground up, urges Castinelli. "Each community knows best its responsible leaders and its most urgent material needs."

"We are helping to build a structure that will stand on its own," says Don Redding, SCF spokesperson. "They couldn't survive without intervention, but it's the local ownership — doctors and staff who identified the needs, chose the site and stood firm during the worst fighting— that will make it last."

SCF is also one of a few NGOs working in the northern territory of Somaliland, where conditions are more stable, but assistance is still badly needed. "The teachers work under very difficult conditions," says Redding, describing how blackboards are set up under trees and children sit on empty milk tins in schools with neither roofs nor books. The organization also works with the Ministry of Education to provide teacher training, purchase textbooks, help design a new curriculum and rehabilitate school buildings.

AFSC has been in Somalia for 10 years, supporting small-scale projects. With an annual budget of less than US$500,000, the NGO supplies food for three communal kitchens, assists two orphanages in Afgoi with food, bedding, medical care, fuel and hygiene, and as the crisis lessens, is developing educational facilities and income-generating projects.

But AFSC's most exciting project, according to David Funkhouser, assistant coordinator of Africa Programmes for AFSC, is an agricultural cooperative in Omaria and 12 neighboring villages, a 120-hectare farm started under the 'scientific socialism' experiments of the Barre government, and relatively speaking, thriving. What is exciting about this project is the degree of Somali involvement, innovation and the cooperation among clans. The NGO has provided 30 head of cattle, a grinding machine, technical assistance and funding for construction. A committee of Somali staff working with elders from different clans makes decisions and the co-op grows grain and vegetables, has built a barn and storehouse, excavated the Asayle canal and is contributing to the cost of the grinding machine. Women members, who shell corn by hand, are lobbying to buy a machine to save time and labour. And the co-op was pushing the AFSC's Somalia Programme Director, Mohamed Abdirahman, to build chicken coops. Yet he decided that, given the economic conditions of the country, feed for the chickens was unavailable and it was premature to raise poultry. There is accountability here, Funkhouser says, and a model that can serve Somalia.

When peace comes to Somalia, the challenges for the international community will be as great as they have been over the past year: to rebuild a country that can provide for itself and stand as a world partner. As the expanding United Nations peacekeeping effort, UN and multilateral agencies, NGOs, donors and Somalis collaborate in this broad-based effort, they must look to the future without forgetting the past. When this battered and beleaguered country is off the television screen and the front pages, when the hopeful work of rebuilding is just beginning, they must believe — in their actions as well as their hearts — that tomorrow's quality of life is as important as today's survival.

*Sara Ann Friedman is Editor of **NGO Action for Children**.*

Kids meet kids on video phone

A new hi-tech means of bringing face to face children thousands of miles apart was the focus of the 1992 International Children's Congress sponsored by the youth-run NGO, 'Kids Meeting Kids'. Last November, 250 children from 40 countries gathered at UNICEF House in New York to meet with others from Brazil, Italy and Mexico by 'lumo-phone', a long-distance video telephone.

But even the best laid plans go awry, and the 'lumo-phone' was no exception — as the children in Brazil and Italy could not be seen on the visual monitor. They could still be heard, however, and children who live or work on the streets of Brazil told the Congress participants in New York about the violence occurring everyday on their streets. They alleged that police, officials and store owners were killing youths, to "clean" the streets for tourists. Herbert Williams, who helped to organize the event, said that the media often doesn't report what happens to children in other countries. "Direct communication like this," he said, "enables youth to do something."

Children in Italy talked about the problems of refugees from former Yugoslavia in their country, and their need for vaccines, food, health care, psychological help, but most of all for peace. And when at last the 'lumo-phone' worked in Mexico, the 250 children at UNICEF House cheered when a Mexican boy's face gradually appeared on the screen. A 16-year-old boy from Covenant House (a US-based NGO) and the Mexican boy discussed the plight of children addicted to drugs in both countries.

In the end it wasn't technology, but two flesh and blood events that brought the somber reality home. A 12-year-old boy, who had escaped from Bosnia and Herzegovina just two months earlier, told the group that he was lucky to be alive and with his family. Asked about his friends, he told a stunned audience that they had all been killed. Shortly afterward, the Congress was told that two Brazilian boys, with whom the organizers had been corresponding, had been shot in the head and killed because of their participation in a street conference.

Karen Daenan, organizer of the Congress, said that the communications flaws turned out to be an asset. It showed the kids just how "difficult it is to get in touch with each other," making them realize even more the importance of youth joining voices, no matter what the distance, and speaking out.

Women cooking and distributing food in an American Friends Service Committee communal Kitchen.

Somali women push for social change

Out of the war's devastation have come some positive and permanent social changes in Somalia. None of the changes, however, are more potentially far-reaching than those affecting the role of women in a society where women remain 'obedient' and 'dependent'. Women traditionally keep the family intact, says Hibaaq Osman, Chair of the Centre for the Advancement of Somali Women and Children. "They take the children to the doctors, hold them when they cry, prepare the meals for their husbands, and pump the water for them to wash. All the man has to do, when he gets up in the morning, is put his feet into his sandals."

The war, however, pushed women into the workplace to support their families. Tasting power and strength, women are now demanding increased political participation. They have organized support groups and created employment for themselves, reviving markets in cities across the country, especially in the more stable northern region of Somaliland. Many have become their families' sole breadwinners and have played crucial leadership roles in the relief effort.

Two of the seven members of the Central Committee of the Somali NGO, UGBAAD (Spring to Life) are women. In many parts of the country, the only people doing business are women. The kitchens and the feeding centres are run by women. The German branch of the Rome-based NGO Caritas supports a Somali women's organization called IDA, which has established a school for 200 children of displaced families within the ruins of the University of Somalia near Mogadishu. The children are taught by former university teachers.

It was Dhaba Issa, the 27-year-old daughter of a Somali businessman and a senior officer for the International Committee of the Red Cross, who figured out that food would be harder to steal if it were cooked before distribution. She persuaded the international NGO to set up a trial kitchen and eventually to increase the number of feeding stations from 50 to 800, changing a centralized system to a local one, with feeding stations run by local people.

Issa told National Public Radio that Somali men consider her a threat. They accuse her of becoming a Christian and "drinking a lot."

When peace comes to Somalia, what will happen to the women? Some fear that the men, who supported a broader role for women in time of need, in peacetime may seek to turn back those advances. If it is up to the women, that is highly unlikely.

In the words of Halima Ismaym Ibrahim of IDA: "I've studied for 18 years from primary school through the university. I have to work. I have to think. I have to help my society. A woman can't be like a chair, a desk, the property of someone. I can't go back into the house."

PUBLICATIONS

Protecting Children in Armed Conflict: A summary sheet

Focusing on the legal rights of children in armed conflict, a summary sheet has been prepared for use by non-governmental organizations (NGOs), field workers and other individuals dealing with this crucial issue. Frustrated by the lack of enforcement of long-standing legal instruments, the Sub-Working Group on Children in Armed Conflict of the NGO Committee on UNICEF has extracted from the Convention on the Rights of the Child, and the Geneva Convention and its two additional protocols, the articles designed to protect children in times of war. For copies of the summary sheet, contact: Sub-Working Group on Children in Armed Conflict, NGO Committee on UNICEF, 3 UN Plaza, H-6F, New York, NY 10017, USA.

Mothers and Children: A bulletin

Published by the Clearinghouse on Infant Feeding and Maternal Nutrition, *Mothers and Children* is a bulletin that is produced three times a year in English, French and Spanish. Recent articles have covered such topics as new research on breastfeeding, communication and nutrition programmes, reports on vitamin A, birth traditions and radio/television health programmes. The bulletin includes a list of resources from the Clearinghouse and a section on publications devoted to women's health.

The bulletin is distributed free in developing countries. In industrialized countries, the cost is US$10 per year. For information contact: Clearinghouse, American Public Health Association, 1015 15th Street, NW, Washington, D.C. 20005, USA. Tel: 202/789-5600.

Vitamin A programmes: A booklet

A new publication for those who work to combat vitamin A deficiency, called *Nutrition Communications in Vitamin A Programmes: A Resource Book*, is being offered to those working in the field to combat vitamin A deficiency. The booklet presents experiences, facts and visual information. It describes communications activities and materials, recommends readings and outlines successful efforts undertaken in seven countries: Bangladesh, Brazil, India, Indonesia, Mauritania, Nepal and Thailand. Single copies are free in developing countries and US$3.50 elsewhere.

They can be ordered from: IVACG Secretariat, The Nutrition Foundation, Inc., 1126 Sixteenth Street N.W., Washington, D.C. 20036, USA. Make checks payable in US dollars to the Nutrition Foundation.

NGO Action for Children

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NGO Action for Children is produced by the NGO Committee on UNICEF. The opinions expressed in the articles do not necessarily reflect those of UNICEF.

Special alert on girls' education

UNICEF, the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) and the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) are determined to reduce illiteracy by half in **Bangladesh, Brazil, China, Egypt, India, Indonesia, Mexico, Nigeria and Pakistan** by the year 2000.

Since nearly two thirds of the children not in school in these countries are girls, and since the education of girls is so vital to the social and economic well-being of nations, the NGO Working Group on Education has decided to focus on education of the girl child. With the knowledge that many programmes already exist, the Committee plans to publish a newsletter informing a wide network of NGOs about these programmes.

We would be grateful to learn of any NGO with programmes on girls' education in the above-mentioned countries.

Please send contact names and addresses to: NGO Education for Girls Subcommittee, UNICEF House, 3 UN Plaza, H-6F, New York, NY 10017, USA.

RESOURCES

UNICEF Publications

Available from:
UNICEF,
3 UN Plaza, RPPL H-12G,
New York, NY 10017, USA

Publications are in English unless otherwise noted.

Helping Children Cope with the Stresses of War: A manual for parents and teachers, by Mona Macksoud, UNICEF, New York, 1993. 139 p. US$14.95.

Children in War: A guide to the provision of services, by Everett M. Ressler et al., UNICEF, New York, 1993. 288 p. US$23.95.

Estrategias para Promover la Educación de las Niñas. Políticas y programas que funcionan, UNICEF, New York. 1993. 92 p. Original English. US$9.95.

Guide de l'UNICEF pour le suivi et l'évaluation, UNICEF, New York. 1993. 156 p. Original English. US$13.95.

L'Education des filles et des femmes, Un impératif moral, UNICEF, New York. 1993. 40 p. Original English. US$5.95.

The following publications are available from your nearest UNICEF office or from UNICEF, 3 UN Plaza, H-9F, New York, NY 10017, USA.

Children and Women — The Trojan Horse Against Mass Poverty? Address by James P. Grant, Executive Director of UNICEF, to the International Development Conference held in Washington, D.C., 11 January 1993. Brochure.

Accelerating Progress for Africa's Children: Africa's Foundation for the 21st Century. Message by James P. Grant, Executive Director of UNICEF, to the International Conference on Assistance to African Children of the Organization of African Unity (OAU), Dakar, 25-27 November 1992. Bilingual English/French brochure.

Halving Maternal Deaths: A Strategy for the 1990s. Address by James P. Grant, Executive Director of UNICEF, to the Meeting of Partners for Safe Motherhood, at the World Bank Headquarters, Washington, D.C., 9 March, 1992. Brochure.

Meeting the Water and Sanitation Challenge in Africa. Message by James P. Grant, Executive Director of UNICEF, to the Conference of African Water Ministers, Ougadougou, 3-5 February 1992. Bilingual English/French Brochure.

Mayors as Defenders of Children. Joint Mayors' Initiative/UNICEF booklet. Also in French. Spanish will follow.

The following publications are available from the International Child Development Centre, Spedale degli Innocenti, Piazza SS. Annunziata 12, 50122, Florence, Italy.

Innocenti Occasional Papers:

Urban Children in Distress: An introduction to the issues, by Cristina S. Blanc. September 1992. US$6.

Childhood and Urban Poverty in Brazil: Street and working children and their families, by Irene Rizzini, Irma Rizzini, Monica Munhoz and Lidia Galeano. August 1992. US$6.

The Urban Child in the Third World: Urbanization trends and some principal issues, by Jorge E. Hardoy. September 1992. US$6.

Children of Migrants and Ethnic Minorities: An overview and conceptual framework, by Cristina S. Blanc and Paola Chiozzi. September 1992. US$6.

The Economics of Disarmament: Prospects, Problems and Policies for the Disarmament Dividend, by Saadet Deger. August 1992. US$6.

The External Debt, Fiscal Drainage and Child Welfare: Trends and Policy Proposals, by Stephany Griffith-Jones. September 1992. US$6.

Implementing the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child: Resource Mobilization and the Obligations of the States Parties, by James R. Himes. November 1992. US$6.

Poverty Measurement in Central and Eastern Europe Before the Transition to the Market Economy, by Sandor Sipos. July 1992. US$6.

Changes in Health Care Financing and Health Status: The Case of China in the 1990s, by Yu Dezhi. December 1992. US$6.

Decentralization and Community Participation for Improving Access to Basic Services: An Empirical Approach, by Housainou Taal. January 1993. US$6.

Other Publications

Evacuation of Children from Conflict Areas: *Considerations and guidelines*, by Everett M. Ressler. UNHCR/UNICEF. Dec. 1992. 32 p. Copies available from UNHCR, Case Postale 2500, CH-1211 Geneva 2 Depot, Switzerland.

Childhood, new global quarterly journal launched in February 1993. For details/subscriptions contact: Editorial Office, Norwegian Centre for Child Research, University of Trondheim, N-7055 Dragvoll, Norway.

Child Survival-World Development Newsletter is the new title for the World Immunization News, beginning March 1993, produced by the Task Force for Child Survival and Development, Carter Presidential Center, 1 Copenhill, Atlanta, GA 30307, USA. Available also in French and Spanish.

UNICEF Videos

Audiovisual materials are available from UNICEF offices and National Committees. (Check with your local office for catalogues.)

1993 State of the World's Children. 10 minutes. Video package includes six short stories plus graphics. Available also in French and Spanish.

Ending Hidden Hunger. 30 minutes. Video on micronutrient deficiencies (vitamin A, iodine, iron) and how they affect families' health. Available also in French and Spanish.

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